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THE INDEPENDENT

No 3,804

SATURDAY 26 DECEMBER 1998

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THE MOMENTS THAT MADE THE YEAR

THE INDEPENDENT'S TOP WRITERS ON THE EVENTS THAT SHAPED 1998

Mandelson comeback to be blocked

BY COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

SENIOR CABINET ministers are planning to oppose any attempt by Peter Mandelson to stage a comeback after his resignation over the failure to disclose a secret personal loan of £375,000 from Geoffrey Robinson.

One cabinet minister said Mr Mandelson's career was "finished" and added: "He should go into business."

Suggestions from friends of Mr Mandelson that the former secretary of state for trade and industry could stand for Mayor of London were being dismissed. "He couldn't beat [Ken] Livingstone for a seat on the NEC [National Executive Committee]. He wouldn't get the nomination of the party in London. Mandelson is not coming back, not in this century and not in the next," said the minister.

Cabinet colleagues are ready to resist any attempt by Tony Blair to bring Mr Mandelson back as a high-profile campaigner next year for the European elections. The Prime Minister, who leaves for his new year holiday in the Seychelles tomorrow, will be left in doubt that Mr Mandelson is brought back in any senior capacity, moves will be made to discredit him further.

"This is about the holy trinity - Blair, Mandelson and Brown," said one of Mr Mandelson's former colleagues. "There will have to be a reassessment of the whole New Labour project now that he has gone."

After Mr Mandelson's resignation, the focus of the affair switched to his application for a £150,000 mortgage from the Britannia Building Society, which was seen as the real cause behind his decision to quit.

John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, who was given the task of steady the



Mandelson: Unanswered questions about mortgage

Government, made it clear in pre-Christmas interviews that he expects Mr Mandelson to clear up the question of the building society loan within two days, to prevent further embarrassment.

It is thought Mr Mandelson did not make clear that he had another loan when he applied for the mortgage for his £475,000 house in Notting Hill, west London. He said at the time that he was financing it with a family legacy, but the loan from Mr Robinson - who resigned as paymaster-general on Wednesday - meant he was borrowing more than 10 times his MP's salary of £43,000.

According to building society sources, making a false declaration on an application form may leave a borrower open to charges of fraud.

Mr Mandelson's spokesman said "he believes it [the form] may not reflect the final financing arrangements on the property as these were decided at the time of the application of the mortgage".

Any contradictions over Mr Mandelson's application form, which he insisted two days ago had been completed "correctly and appropriately", could prove more damaging. The Tories

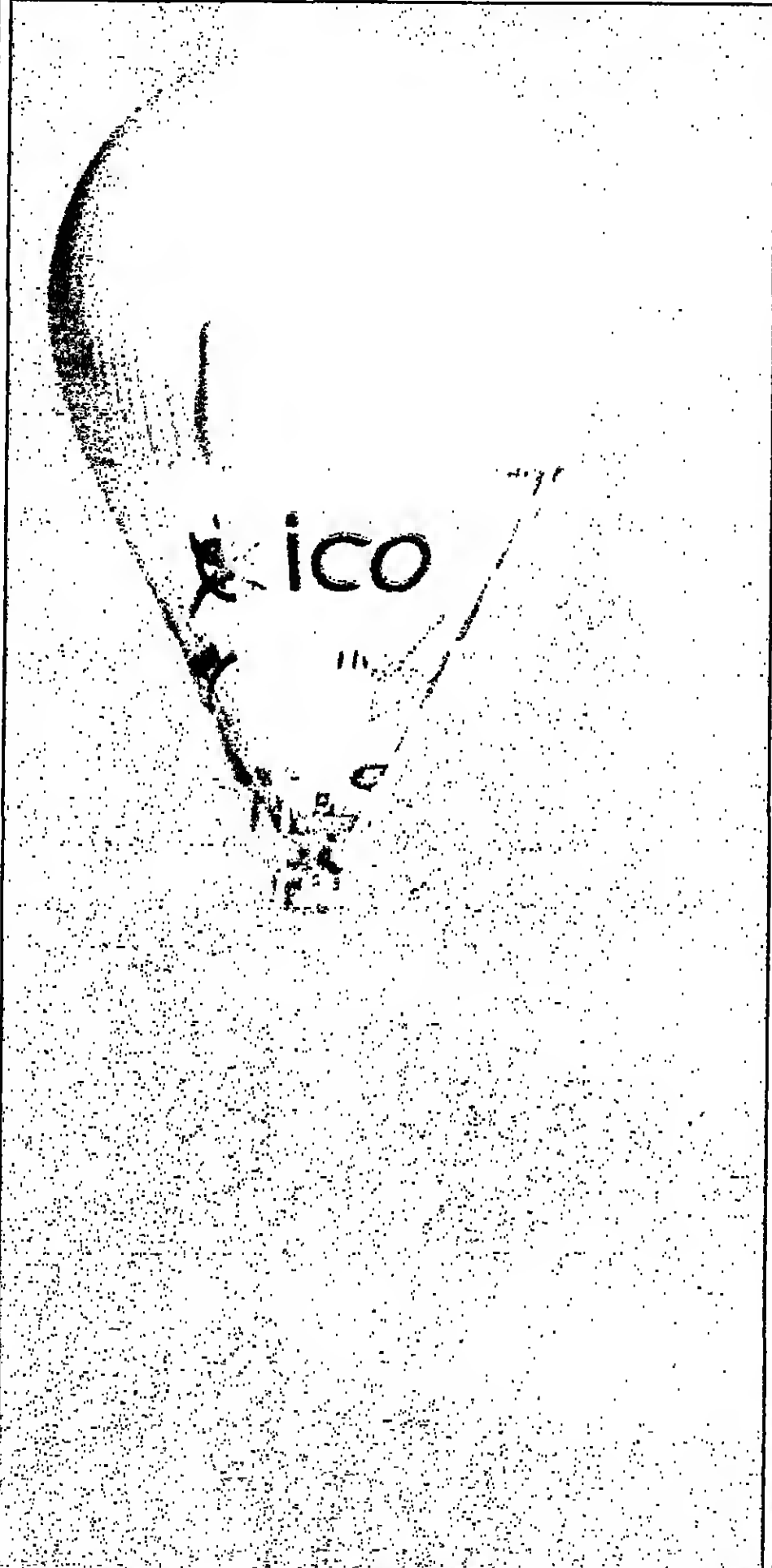
are determined to exploit the loan application to further embarrass the Government. Michael Howard, shadow Foreign Secretary, said: "We clearly need to know the position relating to the mortgage application. Mr Mandelson was clearly being disingenuous when he said he hadn't had time to check. One telephone call to the Britannia Building Society would have provided the answer."

Cabinet ministers intend to use the resignation of Mr Mandelson, architect of New Labour, to halt a possible coalition with the Liberal Democrats, and to clip the wings of Gordon Brown's spin doctor, Charlie Whelan. Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's press secretary, denied saying he wanted Mr Whelan moved, but ministers believe a halt will be called to the internal warfare.

Despite a glowing tribute by Mr Blair in his reply to Mr Mandelson's resignation letter, the former minister's critics are determined to slam the door on his front-line political career. He has made several enemies around the cabinet table, including Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, whose job was under threat from Mr Mandelson.

The resignation is seen by ministers as a catalyst to rid the Blair government of its over-dependency on spin doctoring, and refocus the Cabinet on the delivery of better public services. It gives key players in the Cabinet the chance to regain some control from the Blair inner circle, attacked by the Tories as "Tony's cronies".

Mr Blair signalled that he wanted the modernisation drive to continue by appointing Stephen Byers as Trade and Industry Secretary and Alan Milburn as Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Geoff Hoon was appointed Paymaster-General to replace Mr Robinson and John Denham becomes the new Health minister.



Richard Branson flying in the ICO 'Global Challenger' over Mount Fuji in Japan before the weather forced him to admit defeat in his round-the-world attempt EPA

Branson is forced to ditch in sea

RICHARD BRANSON yesterday abandoned his bid to become the first balloonist to travel non-stop around the world after hitting bad weather over the Pacific Ocean.

Coastguards with paramedics and helicopter support were put on standby to rescue the Virgin tycoon as low pressure forced him to abandon his expedition in shark-infested waters near Hawaii.

The descent, after a series of crises, came short of the 10,406-mile record set by his co-pilot, Steve Fossett, last year.

Mr Branson announced his decision at 1pm yesterday. "I am sorry to have let people down," he told staff at his London headquarters. The low-pressure weather which had stalled his journey was "like a solid brick wall", he said.

Putting a brave face on his third unsuccessful attempt to break the last great aviation record, Mr Branson added: "Until today, the voyage had been a fascinating journey."

An equally deflated project director, Mike Kendrick, said: "So near and yet so far... The weather has beaten us. We have failed."

The three-strong team, consisting of Mr Branson, Mr Fossett and Per Lindstrand, had been hoping to celebrate with a Christmas Stew as they flew over the United States. Instead they spent the day trying to ditch the 27ft high balloon in the sea off the island of Oahu,

BY CLARE GARNER AND LOUISE JURY

near Hawaii. It was the experimental craft's first landing. The balloon had already gone more than halfway around the world since taking off in Morocco on 18 December. Crossing the world's biggest ocean was always going to be the most dangerous part of the journey. Earlier problems were political.

On Tuesday, the balloon drifted off an agreed course over China. Peking ordered the balloon to land but after the intervention of Tony Blair and others the Chinese relented.

The balloon then managed to avoid North Korea, which had refused permission to enter its airspace. Mr Branson was forced to alter his original flight path to avoid US and British bombing strikes on Iraq, and then had to negotiate a narrow corridor between Russia and Iran, both of which refused use of their airspace.

But it was the weather which got the better of them. They feared they would have to spend at least a week trying to navigate their way out of the low pressure system. "We'd go around in circles for a week and still not be able to do anything about it," Mr Kendrick said.

Mr Kendrick said they had missed by about an hour the high westerly winds that would have whisked them the rest of the way across the Pacific.

Rogue London trader loses \$8m

A FAILED \$8m bet by a City of London dealer caused the collapse of a long-standing United States financial institution, it emerged yesterday.

In an event similar to the Barings affair - the respected investment bank which sank under the multimillion pound losses accumulated by the "rogue trader" Nick Leeson - Griffin Trading Company, a Chicago-based trading house, was forced to go out of business after a mystery dealer squandered more than \$5m on a complex financial instrument.

The news of Griffin's demise

BY FRANCESCO GUERRERA

broke in the late afternoon on Christmas Eve, when most financial markets were closed for the Christmas holiday.

In a brief statement, the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange (Liffe), one of Europe's leading market for derivatives and futures, said that Griffin was in default and warned other companies against doing business with the firm.

It was only the second time in the exchange's history that it had declared a member in default - a technical term which means the company is in breach of its trading rules and may not be able to pay its debts. The other occasion was when Barings collapsed after Leeson's bets on the movements of the Japanese stock market had led to a \$880m loss.

Liffe declined to comment on the reasons for the default, but sources close to the company said that Griffin, which has been trading on the US leading exchange, the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) since 1978, had been hit by a huge loss by one of its London dealers.

Griffin acts as a "clearing house", an intermediary between the independent Liffe traders, known as "locals", and the exchange. The firm guarantees and settles the deals carried out by the dealers, in exchange for a fee.

According to the sources, one of the "locals", who are renowned in financial circles for their colourful jackets and passion for alcohol and fast cars, had lost over \$8m on German derivatives, a complex and high-risk financial instrument.

An industry source said: "We are not talking about the sort of

figure that would make a major bank blush but in relation to this firm's resources there was a significant loss."

Ty Fahnner, chairman of Mayer Brown & Platt, Griffin's lawyers, confirmed the loss. "What I know is there was a trader in London that cleared through Griffin Trading Company's London branch and that person substantially exceeded their trading parameters and resulted in a very large loss," he said.

Mr Fahnner said Griffin, which employs about 50 people in the United States, was set to

give up its membership of the CBOT because it no longer met the minimum capital requirements set by the US regulators.

Liffe insiders were surprised by the news of Griffin's departure. One trader said that the company, which is co-owned by Farrell "Tex" Griffin and Roger Griffin - was a well-known presence in the Liffe's trading pits. "This is a reputable firm, which deals with at least 30 to 40 locals. They are not a one-man band, they are a fairly established and well-known organisation."

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IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

'I am convinced that hunting, properly conducted, is not immoral at all. I don't expect others to agree with me. But I do expect them to tolerate my views'

Roger Scruton on the Boxing Day Meet

THE BEST-WRITTEN SUNDAY PAPER IN BRITAIN, FEATURING RUTH PADEL, AN WILSON, JEREMY CLARKE, PETER YORK, JOAN SMITH, SION SIMON, GILBERT ADAIR, DEAR ANNIE, MICHAEL BYWATER, DAVID THOMSON AND CAPTAIN MOONLIGHT

Pope says stop sales of arms

THE POPE used his Christmas address yesterday to call for an end to arms production and a ban on the death penalty throughout the world.

Speaking in the Vatican he said that a halt in arms sales was necessary to "restrain the bloodied hand of those responsible for genocide and crimes of war".

He added: "May Christmas help to strengthen and renew the consensus concerning the need for urgent and adequate measures to halt the production and sale of arms, to defend human life, to ban the death penalty".

His appeal for the abolition of capital punishment was significant, coming a month before a trip to the United States, where 500 convicted killers have been executed since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976.

BY LINUS GREGORIADIS

In Britain, Cardinal Basil Hume appealed for Christ not to be "squeezed out" of Christmas and millennium celebrations. Speaking at Westminster Cathedral in London, the leader of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, said: "What are you celebrating? We have squeezed God out of our culture, and so, paradoxically, we have almost succeeded in removing Christ out of Christmas."

The Archbishop of Canterbury also warned that Britain was neglecting its spiritual health. During a service at Canterbury Cathedral, Dr George Carey said: "Successful governments have taken a commendably close interest in measuring the quality of British life, as a necessary part of the

process of trying to improve it. But all too often those efforts... take no account of our spiritual health as a nation and of the inward life of each and every one of us round which everything else revolves."

In her Christmas broadcast, the Queen called for an alliance of young and old. "It is not always easy for those in their teens or twenties to believe that someone of my age - of the older generation - might have something useful to say to them."

The parents of Stephen Lawrence used their "alternative" Christmas broadcast on Channel 4 to call for new laws to tackle racist crimes. Doreen Lawrence, whose son was killed in a racist attack in south London in 1993, said this year's inquiry into the murder was an "opportunity for real change".



Pope John Paul II meeting Eduardo Lopez Irujo (left) and Marianna Romero, from Mexico, in St Peter's Basilica yesterday. He is to visit their country in January. Reuters

RAF rescues Britons from Sierra Leone

BY MARCUS TANNER

THE RAF was racing against time last night to evacuate hundreds of stranded Britons from the embattled west African state of Sierra Leone, amid fears that a rebel assault on the capital might result in the closure of the airport.

Two RAF Hercules jets succeeded on Christmas Eve in airlifting 81 foreign nationals from Freetown, where a rebel offensive against Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's government has escalated in the last few days.

The evacuees, who included 70 Britons and nine Italian Catholic priests, were taken to Dakar, in Senegal, further up the west African coast. They were expected to fly to London last night on an RAF Tristar.

"This is a precautionary measure, because of the deteriorating security situation," said a Foreign Office spokesman. "The situation is volatile. The rebels have a pretty awful history of atrocity and we don't want any of our nationals put at risk."

In New York, the United Nations said on Christmas Eve it was evacuating about one-third of its staff from Freetown to nearby Guinea and ordering all other UN personnel stationed around the country to head for the capital, Washington.

Some Britons have decided to stay in spite of the growing security risk, including the High Commissioner and an assistant. After the other Britons have been evacuated as a precautionary measure doesn't diminish our very strong support for President Kabbah's democratically elected government," the Foreign Office said.

Britain insisted the airlift did not mean it was washing its hands of Sierra Leone, a former colony. "The fact that we have evacuated as a precautionary measure doesn't diminish our very strong support for President Kabbah's democratically elected government," the Foreign Office said.

Pensioner killed delivering gifts

AN ELDERLY woman was killed as she delivered presents yesterday - one of several Christmas Day tragedies around the country.

Elizabeth Giacomazzi, 74, of Tweedmouth, Northumberland, died instantly after being struck by a car as she crossed the A1, south of Berwick-upon-Tweed. She had been delivering Christmas presents.

A passenger was killed early yesterday when he leaped out of a car window and hit his head on a tree, police said.

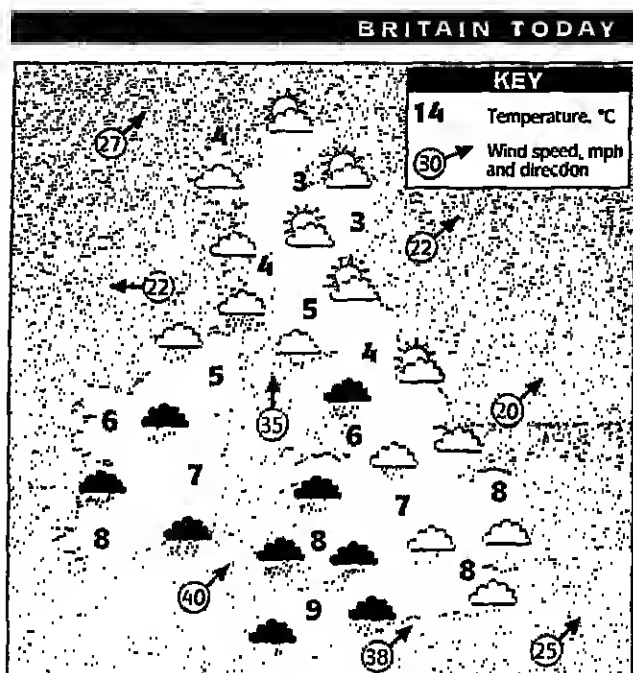
The accident happened at 1.40am at the Herriard Crossroads in Ellisfield, Hampshire. Police said last night that they were still investigating the incident.

A 10-year-old boy suffered head and leg injuries in an accident involving a police car in South Shields, Tyne and Wear, on Christmas Eve. The boy, who has not been named, is in intensive care at Newcastle General Hospital, where a

spokesman said he was "poorly but stable". Earlier in the week a nine-year-old boy was killed in a car crash on his way to visit Santa's grotto at Marwell Zoo near Winchester in Hampshire. Patrick Kaye died when his family's Renault Espace collided with a lorry on the Spitfire Link Road.

In Glasgow, a 63-year-old man died in a Christmas Eve blaze in his tenement home. Police discovered the body of John Leatham, at Stirlingfield Place, in the Gorbals area of the city, shortly after 7pm.

In a separate incident, five people were taken to Glasgow Royal Infirmary for treatment for burns and smoke inhalation following a blaze in the East End of the city. The fire broke out shortly before 2am yesterday in a ground floor flat in a tenement block at Riddrie Knowes, Riddrie. None of those taken to hospital were thought to be seriously injured.



BRITAIN TODAY

General situation Most of the country will start dry but cold and breezy. Cloud will quickly build across south-west England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the wind will strengthen. Gales are likely in the south-east during the morning and will be accompanied by heavy rain. This wet and windy weather is expected to spread north and east during the afternoon. The rain will edge into southern Scotland and will turn to snow over the highlands, but northern Scotland will have a mix of sunny spells and showers.

SE England, London, E Anglia, E & NE England: Starting cold but bright then turning wet and windy this afternoon. A strong to gale force south-westerly wind. Max temp 9-10C (48-50F).

East of England, Channel Is, Midlands: A dry start, but wind will strengthen to bring rain. A strong to gale force south-westerly wind. Max temp 9-11C (48-52F).

SW England, Wales: Clouding over as heavy rain moves across. Winds potentially damaging, increasing to gale force south-westerly. Max temp 9-11C (48-52F).

West of England, Lake District, Isle of Man: Starting dry but becoming wet and windy. A strong to gale force south-westerly wind. Max temp 6-9C (43-48F).

N Ireland: Very windy with heavy showers. A strong to gale force south-westerly wind, backing north-westerly later. Max temp 5-7C (41-45F).

NE & NW Scotland, W & N Isles: Mostly dry at first, but rain and hill-snow will spread from the south-west this afternoon. Increasingly stormy winds towards evening. Max temp 3-5C (37-41F).

SE & SW Scotland, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen: Heavy rain and hill-snow spreading north accompanied by increasingly strong winds with severe gales possible before the end of the day. Max temp 3-5C (37-41F).

OUTLOOK

Sunday will see further outbreaks of rain in the south, but the north will have a blustery mix of sunny spells and scattered showers, the showers wintry across the Scottish highlands. Monday will remain showery, especially in the west, but the east will have some sunny breaks.

TRAVEL

London: A41 Finchley Rd. From Swiss Cottage to Fortune Green. Major works at Finchley Rd Gyratory. Unit 31st December. Cambridge Rd at junction of Albany and Hadden. Construction, lane closures and contraflow. Unit 31st December. Buntingford: A40 between junctions 10 (A65) & 3 (A10) (Wymondley East). Three narrow lanes both ways and a 50 mph speed limit in force. Unit 1st January 1999. Bristol: M5 J16-19. Major Roadworks on Avonmouth bridge. Unit 1st January 2001. Lancashire: M6 between J27 Strathfield and J28 Leyland. Roadworks, contraflow and a 50 mph speed limit. Unit 1st January 1999. AA Roadworks: Call 0336 401777 for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 50p per min (inc VAT).

YESTERDAY

LIGHTING UP

	4.02pm	to	8.46am
Belfast	3.58pm	to	8.18am
Birmingham	4.07pm	to	8.15am
Glasgow	3.47pm	to	8.40am
London	3.57pm	to	8.06am
Manchester	3.54pm	to	8.25am
Newcastle	3.43pm	to	8.31am

HIGH TIDES

	AM	HT	PM	HT
Avonmouth	10.37	4.0	11.06	3.9
Cork	10.06	4.9	10.44	4.7
Dumfries	3.36	6.1	4.11	5.8
Dun Laoghaire	4.46	3.5	4.56	3.8
Falmouth	9.37	4.7	10.15	4.3
Glasgow	5.21	3.2	5.32	3.3
Harwich	4.14	3.6	4.57	3.6
Falmouth	09:37	4.7	22:15	4.5
Greenock	09:21	3.2	17:52	3.3
Hull (Albert Dock)	07:40	4.3	19:55	4.9
Liverpool	03:51	8.1	16:20	8.4
Millford Haven	11:12	6.0	23:44	5.7
Newquay	10:11	6.1	22:44	5.8
Plymouth	11:26	1.7		
Portsmouth	09:11	4.8	15:33	5.1
Southampton	11:29	5.5	23:32	5.8
Leith	07:40	4.3	19:55	4.9
London	06:41	4.0	13:16	4.1
Scarborough	09:14	5.0	21:26	3.1
Wick	04:17	3.0	16:25	3.2

AIR QUALITY

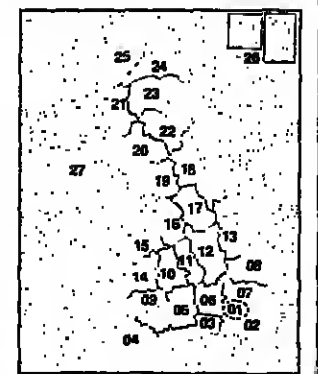
	NO _x	SO ₂
London	Moderate	Good
S. England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good
C. England	Good	Good
N. England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good
N. Ireland	Good	Good

SUN & MOON

Sun rises:	08:06
Sun sets:	15:57
Moon rises:	12:13
Moon sets:	12:13
Last Quarter:	Today

WEATHERLINE

For the latest forecasts call 0991 5669 followed by the two digits for your area. Source: The Met. Office. Calls charged at 50p per min (inc VAT).



THE WORLD

EUROPE NOON TODAY

	Key	Boon	°C	°F
London	11:00C	51	100	51
Paris	11:00C	51	100	51
Rome	11:00C	51	100	51
Madrid	11:00C	51	100	51
Amsterdam	11:00C	51	100	51
Brussels	11:00C	51	100	51
Frankfurt	11:00C	51	100	51
Berlin	11:00C	51	100	51
Munich	11:00C	51	100	51
Vienna	11:00C	51	100	51
Zurich	11:00C	51	100	51
Stockholm	11:00C	51	100	51
Helsinki	11:00C	51	100	51
Tallinn	11:00C	51	100	51
Riga	11:00C	51	100	51
Vilnius	11:00C	51	100	51
Warsaw	11:00C	51	100	51
Budapest	11:00C	51	100	51
Prague	11:00C	51	100	51
Bratislava	11:00C	51	100	51
Vienna	11:00C	51	100	51
Zurich	11:00C	51	100	51
Stockholm	11:00C	51	100	51
Helsinki	11:00C	51	100	51
Tallinn	11:00C	51	100	51
Riga	11:00C	51	100	51
Vilnius	11:00C	51	100	51
Warsaw	11:00C	51	100	51
Budapest	11:00C	51	100	51
Prague	11:00C	51	100	51
Bratislava	11:00C	51	100	51

THE ATLANTIC NOON TODAY

	Key	Boon	°C	°F
London	11:00C	51	100	51
Paris	11:00C	51	100	51
Rome	11:00C	51	100	51
Madrid	11:00C	51	100	51
Amsterdam	11:00C	51	100	51
Brussels	11:00C	51	100	51
Frankfurt	11:00C	51	100	51
Berlin	11:00C	51	100	51
Munich	11:00C	51	100	51
Vienna	11:00C	51	100	51
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Bratislava	11:00C	51	100	51
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Zurich	11:00C	51	100	51
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Helsinki	11:00C	51	100	51
Tallinn	11:00C	51	100	51
Riga	11:00C	51	100	51
Vilnius	11:00C	51	100	51
Warsaw	11:00C	51	100	51
Budapest	11:00C	51	100	51
Prague	11:00C	51	100	51
Bratislava	11:00C	51	100	51

THE WORLD YESTERDAY

	Key	Boon	°C	°F
London	11:00C	51	100	51
Paris	11:00C	51	100	51
Rome	11:00C	51	100	51
Madrid	11:00C	51	100	51
Amsterdam	11:00C	51	100	51
Brussels	11:00C	51	100	51
Frankfurt	11:00C	51	100	51
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Vilnius	11:00C	51	100	51
Warsaw	11:00C	51	100	51
Budapest	11:00C	51	100	51
Prague	11:00C	51	100	51
Bratislava	11:00C	51	100	51

RAIN OR SHINE...

GALES gusting to 70mph are set to sweep across Britain today after a mild Christmas Day.

Although most of the country will start dry, wet and severe windy weather will spread quickly across the north and west of the UK with snow over northern hills and mountains.

The John Lewis Clearance. It's like a sale, only better.

Starts Tuesday.

At John Lewis Department Stores, even during a clearance, it's business as usual. For instance our pricing policy, summed up by 'Never Knowingly Undersold',

means that if we find a local retailer offering the same goods at a lower price, we will reduce ours accordingly, even if their goods are in a sale. We still deliver

free across a wide area. And whatever you buy, you can return it if you are not completely satisfied. The John Lewis Clearance. It's better than a sale.

JOHN LEWIS
Department Stores

LONDON: OXFORD STREET, BRENT CROSS, ABERDEEN, GHAEOLE, GRIBBS CAUSEWAY (JUNCTION 17, M5), GOINBURGH, HIGH WYCOMBE, KINGSTON, MILTON KEYNES, PETERBOROUGH, WELWYN. ALSO AT: PETER JONES LONDON, BAINBRIDGE-NEWCASTLE, BONDS-NORWICH, CALEYS-WINBOR, COLE BROTHERS-SHEFFIELD, GEORGE HENRY LEE-LIVERPOOL, HEELAS-READING, JESSOP & SON-NOTTINGHAM, KNIGHT & LEE-SOUTHSEA, ROBERT SAYLE-CAMBRIDGE, TREWINS-WATFORD, TYRELL & GREEN-SOUTHAMPTON.

سكرا من الارجل

Scotland will soon run out of snow

SNOW WILL virtually vanish from Scotland in the coming century, according to the Meteorological Office's latest supercomputer model of global climate change.

The Met Office's figures show that the onset of global warming will lead to increased precipitation over northern Britain - which will fall as heavy rain, rather than snow, because of an anticipated rise in air temperatures.

Snowfall in Scotland is forecast to decline sharply to a fraction of its present level.

The prediction, contained in unpublished data seen by *The Independent*, is ominous

BY MICHAEL MCCARTHY
Environment Correspondent

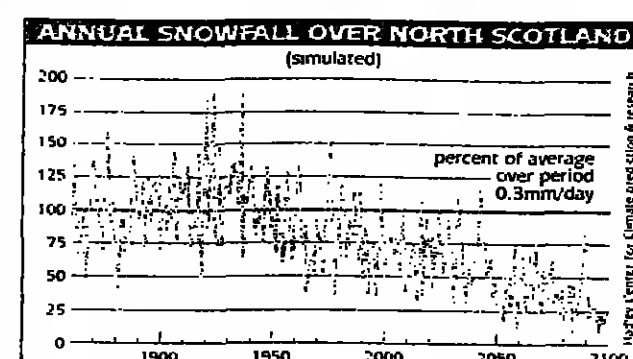
news for the Scottish skiing industry, which two months ago received a long-awaited boost when planning permission was granted for a new £15m funicular railway to transport skiers to the top of the Cairngorm mountains.

The warmer winters north of the border mean good snow conditions are hard to find, and the highest peaks, at just over 4,000ft, are less than a third the height of Alpine summits.

At Glenshee in the warm winter of 1991-92, the number of skier-days, which can be

180,000 in a good year, fell to only 12,500. But the number will fall even further, according to the latest mathematical model of the world's climate. HADCM3, constructed at the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research at Bracknell in Berkshire - one of the world's leading climate-change research bodies.

The model, first run in the autumn on the Hadley Centre's Cray T3E supercomputer, simulates the atmosphere with the greenhouse gases that the world is relentlessly pumping into it (such as carbon dioxide from cars and power stations), which retain more of the sun's



heat - creating what is known as the greenhouse effect. The simulation shows that winter rainfall will get heavier

in northern Britain, as average temperatures rise by an expected 3C by 2100 - a massive increase. It also shows a dra-

matic decline in snowfall in Scotland north of the Clyde and the Forth. By the end of the century snowfall is predicted to be barely a tenth of what it is now.

Dr Geoff Jenkins, head of the climate prediction programme at the Hadley Centre, said: "The temperature rise will mean that more of the precipitation in Scotland will fall as rain rather than snow, so the amount of snowfall will drastically reduce."

"There will be huge year-to-year variability, and there will be some winters when snowfall is still normal. We cannot claim adequate simulation

on a year-to-year basis, but we do claim to reflect the underlying trend."

Snowfall is also likely to decrease over England and Wales, but it is in Scotland - starting from a higher base - that the decline will be most marked.

The heavy rain likely to replace it will do nothing to make Scottish winters more attractive.

Scotland's ski industry centres on five resorts: Ben Nevis, Glencoe, Glenshee, The Lecht and Cairn Gorm.

The season runs from January to April, with the February mid-term school holidays a cru-

cial business period. Last October, after a long planning battle, the Scottish Court of Session in Edinburgh gave permission for the new £15m funicular railway to be driven up into the Cairngorm mountains to replace the ageing chairlift.

Conservation organisations, led by the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, had objected on the grounds that the large engineering works would be out of place in one of Britain's most remarkable wilderness areas.

Construction of the railway is due to begin in the new year.

Tally Ho! Hunts get ready for the biggest showdown

HUNTSMEN AND their opponents are gearing up to do battle in greater numbers than ever before today, as up to half a million people turn out to follow the hounds at traditional Boxing Day meets.

A new mood of confidence will boost the festive atmosphere following the collapse of last year's attempt to push through a ban on hunting with hounds. Around 300 packs are expected to take to the fields.

But opponents of hunting will also be out in force. Around 1,500 saboteurs are expected to try to disrupt the meets and thousands more will take part in peaceful protests. The failure of a private member's Bill, promoted by the Worcester MP Michael Foster, may have given a jolt to campaigners. A Mori poll published today by the League Against Cruel Sports suggests that two out of three people would now vote for a ban in local polls.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has halted plans to push through a new law on hunting until the reform of the House of Lords is complete, arguing that the votes of hereditary peers, many of whom are landowners, would block the move. But a backbench committee of Labour MPs has drawn up plans for local referendums on the issue. They believe this would help them to get round the hunters' argument that urban dwellers who are anti-hunting do not understand rural life.

Anti-hunting groups are optimistic that the Government will publish plans to abolish the sport before the millennium.

Mori questioned almost 2,000 people across Britain earlier this month on whether they would support a ban, and exactly two-thirds said they would vote "yes" to such a move in a local referendum. One in five

BY FRAN ABRAMS
Westminster Correspondent

said they would oppose a ban and one in seven did not know.

Mike Baker, United Kingdom director of the international animal welfare group Ifaw, said the poll demonstrated a deep-seated belief among British people that hunting should be banned. "These figures will send a shiver down the spine of Boxing Day hunt supporters up and down the country. Nothing the hunting fraternity has done over the last year, a period when they threw everything into their campaign to defend blood sports, has had any marked effect on public opinion," he said.

The poll also asked how people would view the Government if it did not act on hunting, but found opinions divided. Just over four in ten said their trust in the Government would be shaken if it did not impose a ban, but a similar number said a failure to take action would have no impact on their views.

The anti-hunting groups are also pleased with the overwhelming vote for a ban in the House of Commons last year, when 411 MPs gave it their backing.

While the majority of the thousands of protesters who will be out today will make their views known peacefully, the Hunt Saboteurs' Association says the failure of the Mr Foster's private member's Bill has swelled its membership. Dawn Preston, northern spokeswoman for the association, said a "backlash" against the Government following the collapse of the Bill had led to renewed militancy.

"It will be difficult to find a saboteur sitting on his backside on Boxing Day. It will be a big day for the hunt, and so we will



Fred the horse greeting one of the Tiverton foxhounds as they prepare for the Boxing Day hunt. Around 300 packs are expected to be out today

Marc Hill

make it a big day for us as well," she said.

The anti-hunting lobby remains defiant, however, and its supporters now feel sure their sport will survive. A spokeswoman for the Countryside Alliance said almost all Britain's 303 packs of hounds would be out on Boxing Day, with 189 of them hunting foxes. Between 300,000 and 500,000 people would either be hunting or would be out supporting the hunt, a spokeswoman said.

While anti-hunt groups claim that hound packs are being merged or closed for lack of interest, the alliance says support and attendances are steady.

Alistair Jackson, director of the Master of Fox Hounds Association, said many hunts had more riders than ever before, possibly because of the threat of a ban last year. "I think people who live in the country do think perhaps they will make an extra effort to go on support the hunt on Boxing Day. I think everyone in the country feels under threat," he said.

The alliance's chief press officer, Bruce Macpherson, said there was now more confidence that hunting had a future. The sport employed around 16,000 people and made a positive contribution to the preservation of habitats for wildlife, he said. "Hunting is a humane means of managing the fox which is a pest to farmers, and it can only take place because of continuing support from farmers," he said.

Angela Smith, Labour MP for Basildon and former head of political and public relations for the League Against Cruel Sports, has been out protesting every Boxing Day for the past 15 years. This year she will be at Maldon in Essex. She says each year more people have expressed their disapproval, and claims the number of riders has diminished.

"With the horses and riders, it's quite a dramatic scene, and people do turn out to look at it. But I have seen them come to look and then cross the road to join the protest," she said.

Ministers impose new tax on restaurants and shops

A £2-A-WEEK "tax" on every food shop and restaurant in the country will be proposed by the Government next month to pay for the new Food Standards Agency.

A cabinet committee agreed before Christmas to give the go-ahead to the controversial licensing scheme for a flat charge on an estimated 600,000 outlets selling food, to meet around half of the £100m running costs for the agency.

The agency is intended to restore public confidence in the British food industry after a series of crises affecting public health.

Whitehall officials shelved the scheme after an outcry from the food industry when the White Paper was first published last January. The Food and Drink Federation described the flat fee as a "food poll tax".

But Tony Blair ordered ministers to revive the plan - to fulfil Labour's manifesto commitment - when it became clear

BY COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

that a deal with Tory and cross-bench peers over reform of the Lords would provide more parliamentary time for more legislation in this session.

To the dismay of the food industry, the Prime Minister has given the plan the highest priority and ordered ministers to get it on to the statute book by the autumn. Downing Street believes the agency's work is vital to restore public confidence after a series of food scares, including Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease from infected beef, and an E.coli food poisoning epidemic in Scotland which left 20 people dead and 400 ill.

"We think £2 a week is reasonable, and it was the only way of raising the money," said a ministerial source. "One problem is that we can't put a charge on imported food so it will have to go on stores and restaurants."



Brown: Lost battle for the Treasury to fund agency

Nick Brown, the Agriculture Minister, appears to have lost his battle for the Treasury to bear the full running costs of the agency.

Restaurateurs and shopkeepers may pass on the cost to customers by raising prices. Although many owners will be able to afford a £100-a-year charge, they are concerned

that the cost could escalate, once the levy is introduced.

Mr Brown confirmed the go-ahead for the scheme in a written answer on the last day of Parliament before the Christmas break.

Ministers argued that the credibility of the agency would be undermined if its independence was compromised and Mr Blair had ordered that it should be under the ministerial responsibility of the Department of Health.

To preserve its independence, ministers will suggest to MPs that it reports jointly to the select committees for health and agriculture, in a rare merging of the committees for special hearings. There were rumours in Westminster that officials at Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food had fought a rearguard action to prevent the agency being fully independent by making it answerable to Maff, but that was denied by ministerial sources.

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A Koran lies in front of a Palestinian child as his mother prays at Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque. More than 150,000 Muslims visited the mosque yesterday on the first Friday of the month of Ramadan *Reuters*

Serbian offensive ends Kosovo truce

THE FUTURE of the international monitoring mission in Kosovo was in doubt yesterday as the fragile truce in the province collapsed amid renewed fierce fighting between Serbs and Albanians.

William Walker, American head of the unarmed mission, said his observers had been threatened by Serb police after they tried to reach the latest flashpoint in the town of Podujevo, north of the province's capital Pristina, on Christmas Eve.

"I became more concerned about the security of my people after yesterday's violence," Mr Walker said. He said he feared

the violence would worsen and that Serbia would not fulfil its pledge to guarantee the safety of the international observers.

"The evidence I have seen so far shows that the government is incapable of ensuring their safety," he said.

BY MARCUS TANNER

Kosovo's crumbling truce appeared to collapse entirely on Christmas Eve after Serbia sent about 100 tanks into Podujevo in search of Albanian fighters from the pro-independence guerrilla movement, the Kosovo Liberation Army. The KLA killed a Serb policeman earlier this week. Yesterday, one Albanian, a six-year-old girl, was reported killed by Serbian forces, although the death toll is expected to rise.

The assault elicited a declaration from the KLA that they regarded the American-brokered truce as over.

"The KLA will not stay with arms crossed, [but] will attack and defend itself," the movement said in a statement carried

Fighting in Kosovo between local Albanians and the Serbian



toomy for Kosovo, which show
no sign of taking place.

The European Union envoy to Kosovo, Wolfgang Petritsch, warned Serbia yesterday that the West "will not tolerate an excessive use of force by the Yugoslav army" in the province.

"Dozens of armoured vehicles and tanks have been observed deployed in the region," Mr Petritsch said. "Villages close to Podujevo are [being] attacked by heavy artillery."

Nato's Secretary-General, Javier Solana, said the Serb offensive was in "clear violation of the commitments" undertaken in October by Belgrade. "We remain fully vigilant and ready to act," he said.

Serbia's leader, Slobodan Milosevic, may be bargaining that the tough talk will not lead to action at a time when most Western leaders are on holiday and preoccupied with Iraq.

Patriarch hits out at clerical big spenders

BY MARCUS TANNER

RUSSIAN PRIESTS, a hunted species in the days of the old Soviet Union, have been rebuked for their increasingly lavish lifestyles.

The chastisement from the clergy's own spiritual father came just over a week before the faithful celebrate Christmas, which most Orthodox churches mark in the first week of January.

The Patriarch of Moscow, Aleksy II, told a church meeting that too many priests were addicted to expensive cars and mobile phones at a time when many parishioners were struggling to stay alive, a newspaper reported yesterday.

The Patriarch compared some of his clergy to "oew Russians", the unpopular nouveau riche mafiamen and businessmen notorious for vulgar displays of wealth.

Some priests were out of touch with ordinary Russians, who are struggling to make ends meet as the economy goes through its worst crisis since the Soviet collapse, Patriarch Alexy said.

"Impoverished people see that they are not helped by anybody," he said. "Neither the state nor society is taking care of them, and now the church, too, shows that the rich and not the poor are closer to her."

The Patriarch complained that some priests were forming ties with dubious and even illegal businesses to obtain money.



Patriarch Aleksy: 'Priests out of touch with poor'

Parishes had "business contacts with representatives of private companies, banks and the shadow economy", he said. "This does not correspond with Christian ethics."

The complaints are an illustration of just how far the Orthodox Church has travelled since the Communist era, when churches were closed, the nation was force fed with "scientific materialism" and believers were the butt of constant harassment and imprisonment.

Today in Russia, as elsewhere in the Orthodox world, the church has undergone an astonishing revival. The beneficiary both of disenchantment with Communism, the rise of nationalism and a general feeling of cooptment - or despair - about politics.

IN BRIEF

Gatecrashers kill eight at party

EIGHT REVELLERS in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province were shot dead by a group of armed gatecrashers who had been refused entry to a Christmas Eve party in the town of Margate. When the men were turned away they fired random shots at party-goers. President Nelson Mandela said he was "shocked and outraged" by the killing.

Bin Laden urges revenge attacks

THE EXILED Saudi dissident, Osama bin Laden, called on Muslims to attack United States and British citizens and interests to avenge the two countries' air strikes on Iraq. Bin Laden, quoted in the London-based *Asharq al-Awsat*, said: "Anything that could be taken from them by force is a prize for the Muslims." He is accused by the US of masterminding the US embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.

China tries fourth dissident

CHINA WILL try a trade union activist, Zhang Shuangui, tomorrow for threatening national security. He will face a court in Huaihua city, central Hunan Province, for "illegally providing information to overseas organisations", said the New York-based Human Rights in China. He will be the fourth opposition figure to face trial in two weeks.

Worshippers overcome by fumes

CARBON MONOXIDE fumes from a faulty heating system made 250 people sick who were attending Christmas Mass in a church in Savèrdu, in the Ariège region of south-west France. A crisis centre was set up to treat the worshippers with oxygen.

THE WEASEL

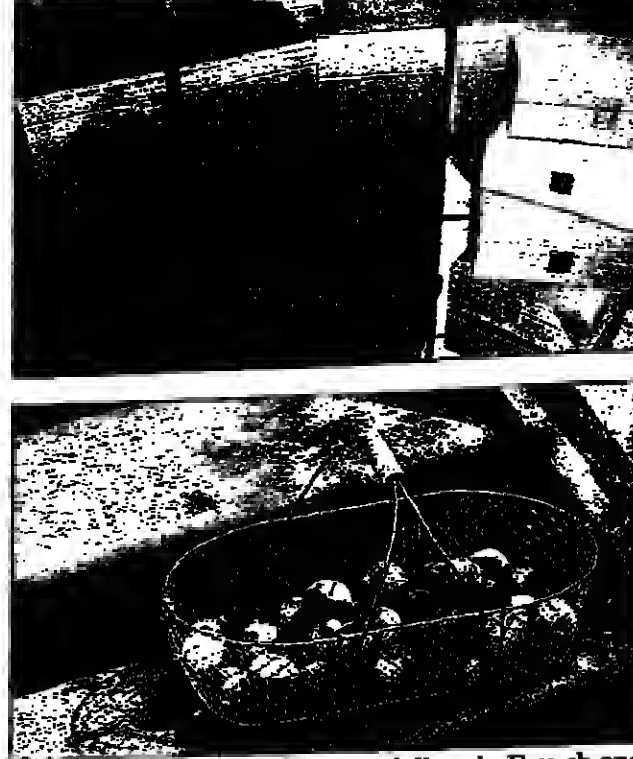
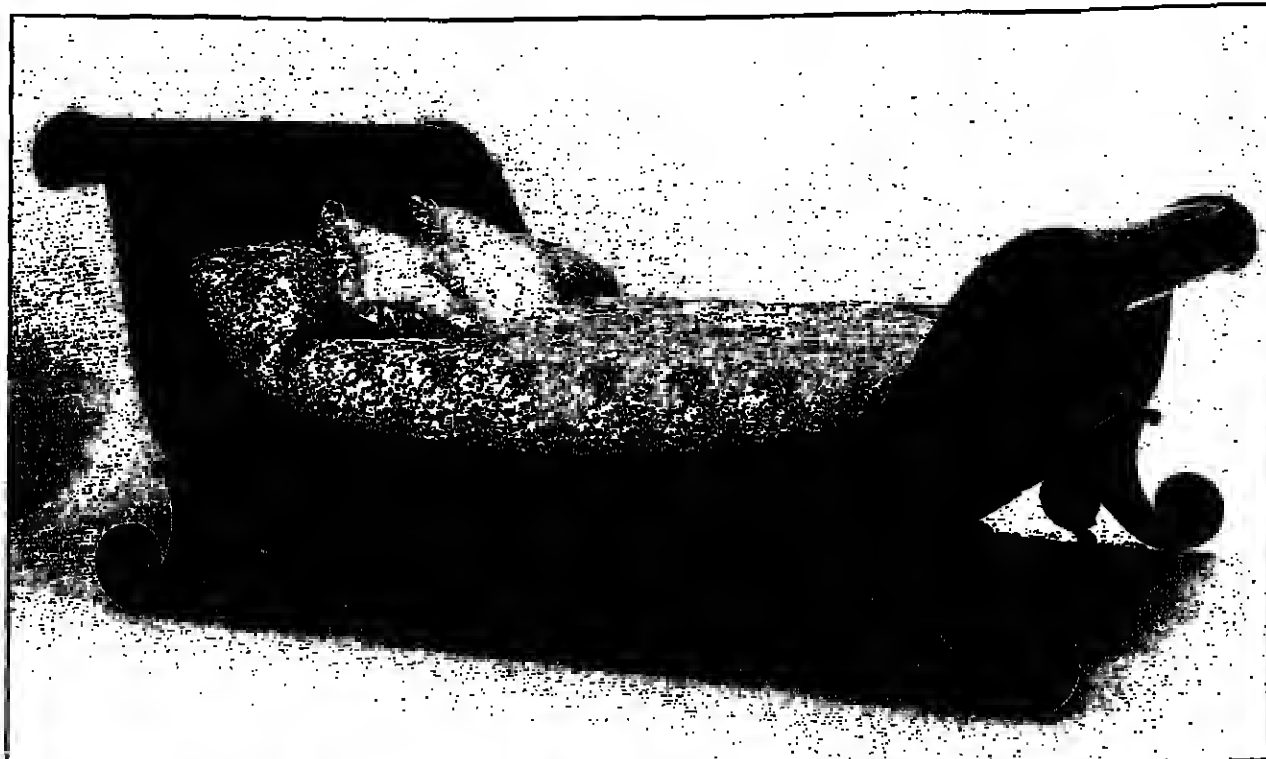
Geoffrey Robinson is strikingly reminiscent of Alexander 'Oofy' Prosser



IN THE WEEKEND REVIEW PAGE 2

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NEW YEAR SALES GUIDE



A bright array of glass candlesticks (left) and boxes of many sizes to put anything in (top right) are among the choices from Carden Cinietti, with a sleigh bed from Simon Horn Furniture, which specialises in French and classical beds (second left), and a wire basket is among the selection from House which is putting all its favourite things from 1998 into one mail order catalogue and knocking 20 per cent off the price of them all

No pain, no gain in the high street

ON THE high street during the January sales, the happy new year shopper is much like the happy new year jogger - optimistic and courageous but seldom convincing.

BY RHIANNON BATTEN
Shopping Editor

doubt be far cheaper now than at any other time of year) is the motto of the day and, for the well-trained buyer, the effort may even be worth it.

To get in to good shopping shape, the path to success begins with decent preparation. Wandering lazily into town for a peek into Debenhams may well result in a surprise bargain

but it may just as likely end in a tired, grumpy body and a carrier bag full of cushions that don't quite match your curtains and a retro-style card that's more frumpy than funky. Instead, start early in the day, plan a route that won't involve impromptu monetary detours and go armed with a specific shopping list.

January is a good month to revamp the house. For Londoners seeking luxurious decorative items, head for Carden Cinietti to grab yourself 20 to 75 per cent off candle-holders, cushions and glassware.

In south London, Designers Guild has reduced bed linen, blankets, towels, upholstery, tableware and accessories and in the east, there's Same, the funky furniture, lighting and home accessories store with up to 50 per cent off selected stock, including sofas from Asplund and coloured crockery by Dibern.

Beyond London, House is putting all its favourite things from 1998 into one mail order catalogue and knocking 20 per cent off them all. Choose from rustic china, French wire shelves and baskets, classic enamel pitchers and sisal baskets.

For kitchen and tableware, Jerry's Home Store is offering Duallit combi toasters for £199, £20 less than usual, and Mulberry Hall has all manner of china, crystal and cutlery in its sale, including 60 per cent off Villoray & Bosch seconds, 50 per cent off silver frames and cutlery and 30 per cent off selected Spode bone china tableware.

Meanwhile, luxury kitchenware specialist David Mellor is offering 20 per cent off most ranges of cutlery, 10 per cent off everything else in the shop and up to 90 per cent reductions on many one-off pieces. Graham & Green's sale includes a 24-piece plain stainless steel cutlery set reduced from £99.95 to £39.50. Richard Sapper chairs are reduced by 40 per cent and a six-candle chandelier is half-price at £25.

For the ultimate in linen try the Monogrammed Linen Shop for Liff of the Valley embroidered single sheet sets, reduced from £179 to £125 and half price gingham napkins at £3.25 each or The White House for luxury white towelling bath robes reduced from £79 to £49, fine cotton percale bed linen at half price, short cream silk negligé sets reduced from £75 to £38.50 and baby Dior snowsuits reduced from £95 to £47.50.

Hedge your bets whatever you're after at Heal's. From handmade beds at 15 per cent off to dried flowers for 50p a bunch and Heal's own-label cologne reduced from £13.95 to £9.95, you should find something worth getting the credit card out for.

Christopher Wray is the place to find good lighting. Non-catalogue and discontinued lights, including table lamps, pendant lights, wall-brackets and exterior lighting will be reduced from between 10 and 50 per cent and, for larger purchases such as kitchen appliances and white goods, try Buyers & Sellers. Goods here

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Molton Brown skincare to repair festive excess
include the sleek Gagganau SK332 American-style side-by-side fridge-freezer with stainless steel doors, reduced from £3,800 to £1,995.

And, of course, no good shopping workout is complete without some good old beauty buys to lift those weary spirits. Molton Brown has a covetous skin-care essentials pack in a clear zip-lock bag for £17.50. Space NK Apothecary has up to 50 per cent off selected lines and Aveda is also offering customers a lucky-dip for people spending over £15 on three items, or £20 on four items, in its London shop.

BEST OF THE SALES FOR THE HOME

Carden Cinietti, 83 Westbourne Park Road, London, W2 5QH (0171-229 8559). (Goods pictured right.) All January.

Designers Guild, 267 King's Road, London, SW3; and 6 Relay Road, Ariel Way, Wood Lane, London, W12. 9 January for 1 or 2 weeks.

House, 42 Salisbury Street, Blandford Forum, Dorset, DT11 7PR (01258 454884). (Crockery pictured below.) Starts 28 December.

Same, The Bridge, 146 Brick Lane, London, E1 (0171-247 9992). All January.

Jerry's Home Store, 163 Fulham Road, London, SW3 6SN, 28 December to 2 February.

The Holding Company, 24-25 King's Road, London, SW3 (0171-352 1600); 41 Spring Gardens, Manchester, M2 2BG (0161-834 3400); telephone for mail order on 0171-610 9160. 27 December to 17 January.

Monogrammed Linen Shop, 168 Walton Street, London, SW3 2JL (0171-589 4033). 4 January to 31 January.

Mulberry Hall, 1 Little Stonegate, York, YO1 2AW (01904 620736). 2 January.

David Mellor, 4 Sloane Square, London, SW1W 8EE (0171-730 4259). The Round Building, Hathersage, Derbyshire, S32 1BA (01433 650220). 2 to 16 January.

The White House, 40-41 Conduit Street, Mayfair, London, W1R (0171-629 3521). 28 December.

Space NK Apothecary, 4 Thomas Neal's, 37 Earlsfield Street, London, WC2. 27 December to 31 January.

Aveda, The Aveda Institute, 28/29 Marylebone High Street, London and various outlets from 27 December.

Molton Brown, 58 South Molton Street, London, W1 (0171-499 6474). 28 December.

Christopher Wray, 591 King's Road, London, SW6 2YW (0171-736 8434) branches through the UK. London from 27 December. Manchester from 26 December to mid-January.

Graham & Green, 4, 7 & 10 Elgin Crescent, London, W11 2JA (0171-727 4594); 164 Regent's Park Road, London, NW1 8XN (0171-586 2969). 5 to 31 January.

Heal's, 196 Tottenham Court Road, London, W1P 9LD (0171-636 1666); 234 King's Road, London, SW3 5UA (0171-349 8411); Tunsgate, Guildford, GU1 3QU (01483 576715). 28 December to 17 January.

House of Fraser, stores nationwide. 26 December to 24 January for Scotland; 27 December to 24 January for England.

Buyers & Sellers, 120-122 Ladbroke Grove, London, W10 3NE (0171-229 1947). 29 December to January 31.

Back2, 28 Wigmore Street, London, W1M 9DF (0171-935 0351). 20 January to 20 February.

Simon Horn Furniture, 117-121 Wandsworth Bridge Road, London, SW6 2TP (0171-731 1279). From 29 December to 31 January.

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Clever fashion shoppers spend more to get best bargains

FOR THOSE lucky enough to have some cash or credit at their fingertips, now is the best time to buy fashion.

In this instance "now", and "fashion" are the key words. For we are not talking about average clothes.

Real fashion is aspirational - it is what we quietly wish for, not what we actually buy. That is why this year, and into the next one, fashion sale shopping

By MELANIE RICKEY
Fashion Writer

should be approached in a new, less haphazard way, which we will call "blueprint buying". The idea is to pick out pre-ferred designers and a few desired "looks" from the latest glossy magazines.

In the January issues of the main fashion magazines, urban utility chic, luxury minimal-

ism, bohemian and the romantic hippy look get a strong airing, as do colours. Next year every colour - apart from black - will make a huge impact. The most important will be shades of pink, red and yellow.

Once a few decisions have been made, wear out chosen pages and take them shopping to keep the mind focused; it is time to buy these autumn/winter pieces with the view

that they will be worn continually throughout the year.

This will involve spending proper money; but isn't it better to have paid £250 (rather than £400 for a Matthew Williamson snowflake cashmere jumper from Browns, or a black Ann Demeulemeester suit - jacket £275 (from £405), trousers £110 (from £189) - from Liberty?

These clothes are instantly

recognisable as expensive, covetable items, and ones that upgrade an outfit from just OK into absolutely fabulous.

The best places to make crucial blueprint buys are independently owned designer boutiques with varied stock, and designer-owned stores such as Chanel, Gucci and Prada who can make big mark-

downs on their merchandise. Manchester, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Glasgow and, of course, London are the best cities to find them, although large towns usually have two or three high-fashion boutiques.

In Barnsley, Pollyanna has up to 50 per cent off labels such as Yohji Yamamoto, Martin Margiela and Commes des Garçons. In Glasgow, Cruise has up to 50 per cent off Dolce & Gabbana. Prada and Gucci for men and women.

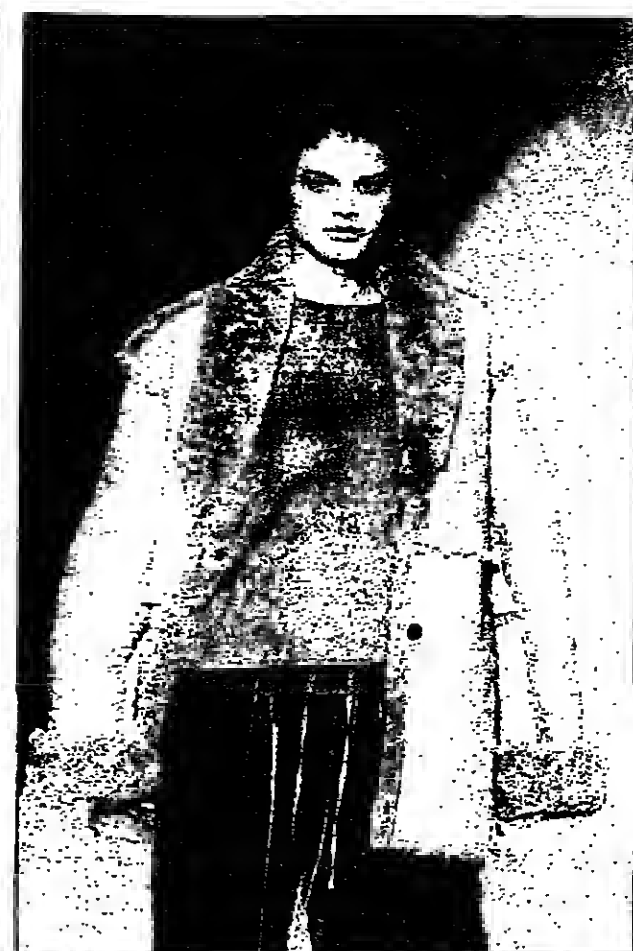
In Wimbledon Village, southwest London, Matches has a Prada raincoat for £239 (from £435), and a Dries Van Noten print dress at £180 (from £382).

At Betty Jackson's London boutique one of her wonderful sheepskin jackets is £262 (from £1,000), and at John Rocha's recently opened boutique there are bargains galore, especially on trans-seasonal organza dresses, £315 (from £450), silk

satin skirts, £111 (from £158) and delicately embroidered tops £278 (from £397).

The choices are fairly wide at the beginning of the sales, but the closet blueprint buyers will be out in force, snapping up the pieces they have had their eyes on for weeks.

After all, why pay £500 for a dress, safe in the knowledge that seven days later it will be £250? Why indeed.



Fashionable bargains available, as seen on the catwalk (from left): Ann Demeulemeester black suit from Liberty, was £584, now £385; Betty Jackson sheepskin jacket, was £1,000, now £262; John Rocha claret skirt was £159, now £111 and black top was £397, now £278

BEST OF THE FASHION SALES

Specialist boutiques

A La Mode, 36 Hans Crescent, London SW1; 0171-584 2133; sale from 28 December to 10 January

Alberta Ferretti, 205-206 Sloane Street, London SW1; 0171-235 234; 28 December to January 31

Ally Capellino, 66 Sloane Street, London SW3; 0171-591 8201; from 2 January

Betty Jackson, 311 Brompton Road, London SW3; 0171-589 7884; 29 December

Biba, 15 Shorts Gardens, Covent Garden, London WC2; 0171-359 3699; sale now on

Browns, 23-27 South Molton Street, London W1; 0171-491 7833; 9 January

Browns Focus, 38/39 South Molton Street, London W1; 0171-629 0666; 9 January

cK Calvin Klein, 55 New Bond Street, London W1; 0171-491 9696; 27 December

Chanel, 26 Old Bond Street, London W1; 0171-493 5040; 167-170 Sloane Street, London SW1; 0171-235 6631; 6 to 16 January

Christiano Dior, 22 Sloane Street, London SW1; 0171-235 1357; 29 December

Comme des Garçons, 59 Brook Street, London W1; 0171-493 1258; sale now on until mid-January

Corniche, 2 Jeffrey Street, Edinburgh EH1; 0131-556 3707; 1 January

Cruise, 180-188 Ingram Street, Glasgow G1; 0141-572 3232; 26 December until the end of January

DA Lillard, 44 Monmouth Street, Covent Garden, London WC2; 0171-379 8399; 29 December

Dolce & Gabbana, 175 Sloane Street, London SW1; 0171-235 0335; 29 December until 20 January

DKNY, 27 Old Bond Street, London W1; 0171-499 8089

Donna Karan, 19 New Bond Street, London W1; 0171-495 3100; 27 December until mid-January

Egg, 36 Kinnerton Street, London SW1; 0171-235 9315; 19 January for two weeks

Emporio Armani, 191 Brompton Road, London SW3; 0171-823 8818; 27 December until January 10

Flannels, 4 St Ann's Place, Manchester, M2; 0161-832 536 for branches in Nottingham, Leeds, Newcastle and Birmingham; 27 December until stock lasts

Georgina von Etzdorf, 50 Burlington Arcade, London W1; 0171-409 7789; 30 December until stock lasts

Ghost, 14 Hinde Street, London W1; 36 Ledbury Road, London W1; 0171-229 1057; 29 December

Giorgio Armani, 37 Sloane Street, London SW1; 0171-235 6232; 27 December until January 10 (approx)

Gina Shoes, 189 Sloane Street, London SW1; 0171-235 2932; from now until end of January

Graham & Green, 10 Elgin Crescent, London W1; 0171-727 4594; 5 January

Gucci, 33 Old Bond Street, London W1; 18 Sloane Street, SW1; 0171-629 2366; 2 January

Hermes, 155 New Bond Street, London W1; 179 Sloane Street, London SW1; 0171-499 8856; 16 January

Issey Miyake, 270 Brompton Road, London SW3; 0171-581 3760; 28 December for three weeks

Jane Davidson, 52 Thistle Street, Edinburgh EH2; 0131-225 3280; 28 December

Jean Paul Gaultier, 171-175 Draycott Avenue, London SW3; 0171-584 4648; now until end of January

John Lobb, 88 Jermyn Street, London SW1; 0171-930 8089; 28 December

John Rocha, 60F Sloane Avenue, London SW3; 0171-838 0017; 28 December

Jones, 15 Floral Street and 13 Floral Street, Covent Garden, London WC1; 0171-240 8312; 6 January

Joseph, 77 Fulham Road, London SW3; 26 Sloane Street, London SW1; 23 Old Bond Street, London W1; 0171-823 9500; other Joseph branches; 28 December

Joseph Azagury, 117 Walton Street, London SW3 and 73 Knightsbridge, London SW1; 0171-259 6887; now until end of January

Katherine Hammett, 20 Sloane Street, London SW1; 0171-823 1002; 28 December

Koh Samul, 65 Monmouth Street, London WC2; 0171-240 4280 and 28 Lowndes Street, Knightsbridge, London SW1; 0171-838 9292; 29 December

Krizia, 25 Conduit Street, London W, 0171-491 4987/8; sale now on

L.R. Bennett, 31 Brook Street, London W1; call 0171-491 3005 for other branches; sale now on

Mauro Biondi, 49 Old Church Street, London SW3; 0171-352 8622; 8 January

Margaret Howell, 29 Beauchamp Place, London SW3; 24 Brook Street, London W1; 36 Saville Row (menswear); 0171-584 2462; 29 December

Matches, 34 & 56 High Street, Wimbledon Village, London SW19; 13 Hill Street, Richmond, Surrey; 0181-947 8707; 28 December

Mulberry, 41-42 New Bond Street, London W1; Gees Court, London W1; 0171-491 3900; 27 December

N. Peal, 37 Burlington Arcade (women), London W1; 71 Burlington Arcade, London W1 (men); 0171-493 5378; 28 December

Nicole Farhi, 158 New Bond Street, London W1; 193 Sloane Street, London SW1; 0171-499 8368 for other stores; sale now on

Patrick Cox, 129 Sloane Street, London SW1; 0171-730 8886; 81 King Street, Manchester M2; 0161-819 5336; 27 December London branch; sale now on in Manchester

Paul Smith, 40-44 Floral Street, Covent Garden, London WC2; 0171-379 7133 for Manchester, Nottingham and other branches; 2 January

Pleats Please, 20 Brook Street, London W1; 0171-495 2306; 28 December

Pollyanna, 14-16 Market Hill, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70; 01226-291665; 2 January

Polo Ralph Lauren, 143 New Bond Street, London W1; 0171-491 4967; Sale starts 2 January until the end of January

Prada, 43-45 Sloane Street, London SW1; 0171-235 0008; January

Richard James, 31 Savile Row, London W1; 0171-434 0606; 9 January

Sam de Tiran, 151 Fulham Road, London SW6; 0171-584 0902; 4 January

Thierry Mugler, 134 New Bond Street, London W1; 0171-629 7020; now until 12 January

The Cross, 141 Portland Road, Holland Park, London W11; 0171-727 6760; 11 January

Valentino, 174 Sloane Street, London SW1; 160 New Bond Street, London W1; 0171-235 5855; sale now on

Van Mildert, 19-21 Elvert Bridge, Durham DH1; 0191-384 8500; 27 December

Versace, 34-36 Old Bond Street, London W1; 0171-499 1862; 6 January

Versus Jeans Couture, 113-115 New Bond Street, London W1; 0171-355 2700; 4 January

Vivienne Westwood Man & Red Label and Anglomania, 44 Conduit Street, London W1; 0171-439 1109; Gold Label, 6 Davies Street, London W1; 0171-629 3757; 15-17 County Arcade, Victoria Quarter, Leeds; 01132 456403; first week in January

World's End, 430 King's Road, London SW10; 0171-352 6551; first week in January

Whistles, 12 St Christopher's Place, London, W1; 0171-487 4484; now on

Yohji Yamamoto, 14-15 Conduit Street, London W1; 0171-4891 4129; sale now on for at least a month

Yves Saint Laurent, Rive Gauche Men and Women, 33 Sloane Street, London, SW1; 0171-235 5839; Rive Gauche Women, 137 New Bond Street, London W1; 0171-493 1800; 29 December

Department stores

Barkers, Kensington High Street, London W8; 0171-937 5432; 27 December

Debenhams, 0171-408 4444; 26 December Scotland and Manchester; 27 December elsewhere

Dickens & Jones, Regent Street, London W1; 0171-734 7070; 27 December

Fennelick, 63 New Bond Street, London W1; 0171-629 9161 for other branches; 27 and 28 December

Harrods, Knightsbridge, London SW1; 0171-730 1234; 6 January

Harvey Nichols, London, SW1; 0171-235 9000; 27 December

Liberty, Regent Street, London W1; 0171-734 1234; 27 December

Selfridges, 400 Oxford Street, London W1; freephone 0800-123400; Manchester 26 December; London 27 December

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1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997; 278: 1039-1044.

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THE INDEPENDENT YEAR

Saturday 26 December 1998

9

While bombs fell and storms raged, politics suddenly became personal

AND WHAT will they say of us, these children of ours, when they write the history of what we did in 1998? Probably that this was the year that many of us lost the plot. Without the polarity of the Cold War and imminent extinction to concentrate our minds, we lounged like Babylonians on our couches, ate grapes and quails' eggs, and rowed furiously over adultery and money. And all the while the serpent's teeth of future disaster were being sown just outside.

In 1998, the personal really did become political. When that happens, human beings finally have a story that they can readily comprehend – without the necessity of having to think too hard. We are permitted to forget the har-charts and the hard choices, and take sides for or against the fornicator. Who, in this instance, was the priapic president, William Jefferson Clinton – a man all testosterone and empathy, whose year turned into a biblical epic, as rendered by *National Lampoon* and made 1998 the age of war and fellatio.

As of 1 January no one had heard of Monica Lewinsky. Almost no one. By the year's end she had become the lico of the confessional age, a needy, insecure, queuing young woman, giveto to telling all to those who she should least have trusted: what, how often, where and most bizarre of all on what. Among her personal Oprahs was the pantomime villainess, Linda Tripp, who was secretly recording the details for later use. These were the tapes that trapped Ms Lewinsky, and that also, therefore, caught Mr Clinton in Kenneth Starr's perjury trap. (There is a verbal symmetry here: Linda Tripp, Kenneth Starr, Paula Jones. Two syllables, one syllable – the metre of murderous triviality.)

The story broke, not in a newspaper or on television, but on the Internet. Nevertheless, from the beginning it was the only show in town. Press conferences to hail Middle East peace accords were hijacked by intelliegot journalists asking inane questions about genitals and Tony Blair blushed like a oun at a strip show, as his American friend was given the third degree. "I want you to listen to me," said President Clinton. "I'm going to say this again. I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky." The DC game of waiting for the American public to turn on its president had begun.

Outside Washington others watched and wondered. In February, President Saddam Hussein of Iraq tested the distracted West to the limit, hocking the United Nations inspection of Iraqi weapons facilities and nearly triggering air strikes. At the last moment the Secretary-General Kofi



BY DAVID AARONOVITCH

Annan, persuaded President Saddam to back down. But how, the smart question went, could a president so enmeshed in scandal deal with the many problems of the world? It was a question that might easily have been changed a little: how could a journalistic and political establishment so narcissistic and trivia-obsessed cope with the oar catastrophes of 1998?

In August, when Mr Clinton finally admitted to not going the whole way in the Oval Office (out of the closet, improbably, came the uncleaned dress and its cargo of presidential DNA), the Russian economy had already entered its epic decline. The

world's second nuclear nation, its warheads rusting in unstable silos and its streets taken over by local mafiosi, was now convulsed by a political crisis, as the ailing President Boris Yeltsin sacked his government, and then could not find another (what a shame that his vice was vodka, not women with big hair).

In Washington they were sure that the people would soon demand the head of Bill. They did not. Not even in September when Kenneth Starr's report became possibly the weirdest and most ridiculous semi-legal

document published in the West since we stopped trying animals for witchcraft. (And when ethnic Albanians were dying in Kosovo.) Not in October when the Congress released Mr Clinton's videotaped evidence and we witnessed a president being asked about his orgasms and Monica's breasts. (And when new riots convulsed Indonesia, as the Far East struggled to limit the scope of its slump.) Hurricane Mitch offered a brief, dramatic diversion from the serious question of what Bill did with that cigar.

It was symbolic of the year that, even as the bombers took off to pound Iraq, the Speaker designate of the House of Representatives, Boh Livingston, was resigning his seat in Congress because an advertisement from a porn king had brought to light a series of adulterous affairs of the judgmental Republican. One moment Mr Livingston had been considered a fit man to hold high office, and then "bimbo!" all of a sudden he was not, on account of his member.

Members played some limited part in the political life of Britain too. Or maybe they did not. After the obscure escapee on a midnight common by Roo Davies, then the Secretary of State for Wales, the British media press played Penny for the Gay. Briefly, the outing of Agriculture minister Nick Brown and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Peter Mandelson, led to a short episode of tabloid homophobia and *The Sun's* headline "Are we being run by a gay mafia?" But the British taste for this kind of thing was, mercifully, fairly limited. *The Sun* backed down.

Here in Britain we had important things to do. Once, of course, we got over our fascination with Viagra. The new wooder-drug's reception here seemed to suggest that the reverse was true in these chilly isles. Regrettably, it seemed, our tails were not wagging the dog. There was more discussion of whether Viagra should be prescribed by the National Health Service than over all other health rationing issues put together.

Trivia did not triumph. The Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland came about partly because Tony Blair felt

"the heavy hand of history" on his shoulders, and persuaded waverers that it was oo theirs, too. We moved, stumbling and occasionally cursing, into the painstaking business of setting up a new administration for Northern Ireland, the Omagh bombing serving to remind everyone, paradoxically, just why the peace was so important. The year ended with the first terrorist guns being handed in and destroyed.

The new Government remained popular and – oo the whole – deserved to. The spending review of the Chancellor Gordon Brown cut no taxes, but put additional resources into the electorate's priorities of education and health. David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, continued his campaign to provide for all children what middle-class parents always secure for their own. The Queen's Speech promised the long overdue abolition of the powers of the hereditary peerage, and Lord Jenkins of Hillhead reported oo his preferred method of electoral reform.

But if the Government's main objectives appeared to be right, some of its instincts seemed suspect. There was the charge of "coolool freckery" concerning the apparent desire of New Labour to retain central power over its own people in the newly devolved centres of power – particularly in Wales and London. The lobbyist scandal, Drapergate, with its suggestions of an ethically challenged New Labour periphery, set the scene for accusations about cronysm. This may well have contributed to the downfall of Peter Mandelson, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, when, right at the year's end, his third of a million personal home loan from Geoffrey Robinson MP was revealed.

For liberals, the low point of New Labour in office was the unthinking populism, which informed the treatment dished out to the author Gitta Sereny in April. This came after *The Observer* newspaper revealed that Sereny had paid Mary Bell – convicted of murder when a child – for helping with the book *Cries Unheard*. The highlight was the detention of the unrepentant former dictator of Chile, Augusto Pinochet, despite the deluge of misinformation put out by his apologists in Britain.

As far as Britain is concerned, however, 1998 may also be written up by our successors as the year of ooe big lost opportunity. Because this was the year when, politics apart, we really should have voted to join the euro. For once we could have been in there from the start; and it begins next week, you know. Or did you turn over from the oews to watch Jerry Springer's chat show instead?

'We can't be like the last lot' – or can we?

THE RETURN OF SLEAZE, BY PAUL WAUGH

"WE CAN'T be like the last lot," Peter Mandelson's parting plea to Tony Blair on the night of his resignation crystallised perfectly the crisis that now faces the Government at the end of 1998.

For a Labour Party that in opposition led a crusade against Tony sleaze that bordered on the evangelical, the past year's string of sexual and financial scandals has surprised even the most cynical of observers.

This week's revelation about Peter Mandelson's £373,000 loan from Geoffrey Robinson was just the latest in a series of stories that left the Government open to the charge not just of impropriety, but also that most damaging political sin of the modern age – hypocrisy.

The Prime Minister's halo had already begun to slip in the wake of the Formula One/Endecostoo affair, but the combination of Sandline, Lobbygate and Ron Davies's nocturnal exploits on Clapham Common ensured that the whiff of sleaze was oever very far away.

The year got off to a shaky start when the Home Secre-

tary, Jack Straw, was identified on 2 January as the minister whose son had been arrested for buying £10 worth of cannabis from a tabloid newspaper reporter.

Seventeen-year-old William Straw received a caution from the police and his father won widespread respect for the way in which he handled the affair.

By coming clean early about the issue, New Labour had proved it was different from the Tories and the Blair government remained untarnished. Even so, the incident was a prescient indication that Labour was just as fallible as the Tories on questions of personal morality.

The first scandal of real substance surfaced in May, when it was alleged that the Foreign Office had colluded with a British firm of mercenaries to help restore the democratically elected President of Sierra Leone. Peter Penfold, the British High Commissioner, and other FO officials were accused of knowingly breaching the United Nations arms embargo in offering assistance to Sandline International.

Tony Blair dismissed the

controversy as a "hoo-bah" as the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, came under systematic pressure to resign.

Mr Cook refused to quit and his Prime Minister stood by him, but the affair guaranteed that Labour's much-hyped "ethical foreign policy" was effectively dead in the waters off Freetown.

Trouble flared again in the summer in the form of Derek Draper, a former aide to Mr Mandelson and self-confessed "big mouth" who bragged to undercover reporters that he had exclusive access to the heart of government.

"There are 17 people who count. And to say that I am intimate with every one of them is the understatement of the century," he said.

Mr Draper resigned from lobbying firm GPC Market Access following allegations that he had offered access to ministers and insider information in return for cash.

The incident forced the Government to tighten up rules on lobbying and gave credence to



Peter Mandelson: Tarnished Labour's clean image

Tory claims that "Tony's cronies" were receiving preferential treatment.

Mr Draper's boast that "I just want to stuff my bank account at £250 an hour" resurrected images of the disgraced Tory MP Neil Hamilton receiving brown envelopes stuffed with cash in return for asking Commons questions.

Ministers easily shrugged



off the juvenile braggadocio, but Mr Draper's words revealed for the first time that there may be something rotten at the heart of New Labour.

However, it was sex, not finance, that grabbed the nation's attention when the Secretary of State for Wales, Ron Davies, presented Mr Blair with his first cabinet resignation in October. Mr

Davies quit his post after he admitted picking up a man from Clapham Common in "a moment of madness" before being robbed at knifepoint.

The Caerphilly MP denied allegations that he had been involved in a homosexual encounter or drug use, but his failure to disclose all the details of the incident dragged out the affair.

In November, Nick Brown, the Agriculture Minister, was forced by the *News of the World* to admit his homosexuality. Mr Brown's swift admission indicated a mature approach that seemed to suggest that Labour really was different from the Tories.

Mr Mandelson was then himself "outed" by the former Tory MP Matthew Parris, and later denied stories that he had visited gay bars on a Department of Trade and Industry tour of Rio de Janeiro.

So far, Mr Blair had shown a Clintonesque ability to rise above the fray, his own Teflon premiership unaffected by the mini-scandals to have sur-

facted to date. He had stuck by his friend Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster-General and millionaire businessman accused of boecoffing from the distinctly Tory-like arrangement of an offshore trust.

The murky world of Mr Robinson's finances seemed the antithesis of New Labour's commitment to transparency and fair-dealing, but Mr Blair remained steadfastly loyal.

Even revelations about the MP's links to companies run by the former tycoon, Robert Maxwell, did not threaten his position. It was only when Mr Robinson was forced to issue an apology in the House of Commons in November, for failing to declare directorships in the MP's register of interests, that his resignation finally looked probable.

Downing Street whispered that Mr Robinson was going to go quietly over the Christmas break. Yet just when the Government could be forgiven for thinking that the year of revelations was finally over, the bombshell landed.

Last week's disclosure that Mr Mandelson had failed to declare the Robinson loan blew

a huge hole in Labour's image as the party of clean politics.

The Prime Minister's own personal judgement, in standing by Mr Robinson and failing to sack Mr Mandelson, came into question. New Labour was portrayed as a naive dilettante that had been seduced by business and wealth. The Blair honeymoon was finally over.

More secrets are sure to emerge in the oew year when both a biography of Mr Mandelson and a book by Robin Cook's former wife, Margaret, will be published.

Mr Mandelson also faces a possible inquiry into his mortgage application and there remain several unanswered questions about Mr Robinson's financial affairs and his connections with other Labour MPs.

Yet despite its year of troubles, it appears that the Government's Teflon coating has only slightly worn. Latest polls put Labour at 54 per cent, more than double the Conservatives' tally. If he was still around, that is a statistic that the Sultan of Spin would be planting on every MP's paper over the festive break.

Clinton's aphrodisiac soap opera

IMPEACHMENT OF A PRESIDENT BY MARY DEJEVSKY

WHEN BILL Clinton was elected president in 1992, Americans knew he had a past. But they could never in their wildest imaginings have expected a saga like the knockabout epic of 1998. From January to December, they – and the world – were spectators to a rip-roaring drama, a low comedy always a hair's breadth away from high tragedy, a perpetual soap opera whose every episode was laced with the aphrodisiac of power.

In the White House were Bill and Hillary – he, a small-town Arkansan become the most powerful man in the world, she the one woman with the redemptive clout to save him. From Beverly Hills came Monica, the Valley Girl with the pert heft, who showed Bill her thigh and brought him pizza, and made the word "intern" the cue for global snickering.

From the Pentagon came

Linda, the ex-military wife with a sideline in tape-recording and a grudge in her heart. From the office of the independent counsel came Ken, arch-pedant and judge, who wheeled his dustbin to his suburban kurb by night and hunted down Bill by day. And then there was Paula – she of the big hair and the nose job – who brought them all together: the only woman in America unswayed by Bill's charms.

There were bit parts aplenty and there were props galore: the gifts, the cigars. And, of course, "that dress", the navy blue dress from Gap with its tell-tale stain that Monica kept in her wardrobe. "Life was so much simpler, wasn't it," snarled an enemy lawyer before Congress, "before they found that dress."

It was a drama neatly paced through the passage of the year. It spanned the finger-

wagging denial of January – "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Ms Lewinsky" – and the hang-dog confession of August – "Indeed, I did have a relationship with Ms Lewinsky that was not appropriate; indeed, it was wrong."

It spanned Monica's disembodied phrases, her "Big Creep" and "Bubba", through the volumes of her complete admissions and, finally, in November, her voice. We saw Linda saying tearfully, "I am you", to justify her betrayal, Monica's "mom" near collapse from the agony of her testimony, and the new-style Paula waving a million-dollar cheque that she never received.

From the man who brought you "I smoked, but I did not inhale", came the redefining of what it means to have sex. And



President Clinton with the support of his wife, Hillary, vows to carry on after the impeachment vote

as the President wrestled with Iraq and Kosovo and the Middle East, the pensions system and health reform, he was also refining his testimony and consulting his lawyers.

By the autumn, Ken's report

the split-screen surreality of a four-day war and a three-day impeachment. It was a political thriller that involved the Congress, the people, their President and the Constitution. Republicans dreamt of Watergate glory and vengeance. They told a tale of broken oaths and trust betrayed, of a chief law officer who did not uphold the law, and cried "impeach".

"This is not Watergate," shouted back the Democrats. "It's an extramarital affair." They were "disappointed" and "sad", but not "betrayed". And when the vote and the verdict came, they dismissed them as illegitimate. For Bill Clinton it was a triumph of survival, and the ultimate disgrace.

When all was said and done, the story of Bill and Monica and the US presidency might not

have seen the light of day but for an Internet squirrel of a gossip, Matt Drudge, who plucked a *Newsweek* story from the "hold-for-more-evidence" pile and triggered a national chase.

Within a week, last January, Bill Clinton's goose seemed to be cooked. If even some of what was rumoured was true – the affair with the "intern", the White House trysts, the semen-stained dress – the wise men and women of Washington were unanimous: Bill Clinton was finished.

But it was all true – and more. And Bill is still here.

All the forecasts proved false. He would have to resign; he refused. He would lose the elections for the Democrats; they won. He would escape impeachment; he was impeached.

His survival showed pre-millennial America split in its soul. A grown-up Sixties generation had taken its live-and-

let-live credo to the White House, and had set thoughts. Affairs were all: but not with an intern. S trysts could be tolerated not in the White House.

Lie about sex if you will you will, but do not d under oath.

The President was pres over a shifting moral lands where upright conserva and spent revolutionaries tled for the high ground, wanted it both ways.

And it is not over yet. At first anniversary of the Bill Monica show looms, the ne and probably last – instal is at hand. Will Bill stand and could the Senate ren him? Will his public sup hold up? Will the Constitu endure? And how many n highly placed adulterers w ruined in his wake?

Time in next year. Se time, same place.

Finally, a future that can defeat the past

PEACE IN NORTHERN IRELAND BY DAVID MCKITTRICK

FOR Northern Ireland, 1998 was a year of extraordinary violence and extraordinary political progress, a year in which appalling tragedy went hand in hand with huge strides towards accommodation.

It was a year so filled with incident that it is still difficult to absorb the lasting significance of it all, for the sheer number and scale of developments was almost without precedent, even for Northern Ireland.

Movement and change were the order of the day, much of it of a positive nature, so that as the year ends hopes remain high of more progress next year. The goal of having all or almost all of the main elements working together in a new coalition government now seems within grasp, assuming another crisis or two can be negotiated.

Yet nothing is guaranteed and, even though much progress was made, no one is really celebrating a year in which more than 50 people were added to the death toll, 29 of them in the Omagh bombing in August. It may or may not be of consolation to the bereaved families to think, as most observers do, that the bombing has made all thoughts of any new sustained campaign of violence virtually inconceivable.

That word "virtually" is there because Northern Ireland is always the most unpredictable of places, as the beginning of 1998 illustrated. Just days after last Christmas, the killing within the Maze prison of the loyalist leader Billy "King Rat" Wright sparked off a furious cycle of retaliation that left 21 people dead.

The Wright shooting created a wave of political and paramilitary turbulence, which threatened the multi-party talks then dragging on at Stormont. When loyalist prisoners in the Maze voted to withhold support from the peace process, the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, took the unprecedented step of going into their H-block to meet them.

It was a gamble but it paid off: the meeting went well and the prisoners agreed to give the peace process another chance. But it did not end the violence, which continued in March with a double killing of extraordinary poignancy.

This was the murder of two friends, Philip Allen, a Protestant, and Damien Trainor, a Catholic, shot by loyalists in the Co Armagh village of Poyntzpass. Belfast was all too accus-

tomed to violent death, but Poyntzpass had remained largely untouched by the Troubles.

The two friends were having a quiet drink when loyalist gunmen burst in and fired repeatedly into their bodies and those of two other people. Mr Allen had just asked Mr Trainor to be his best man, but instead of a wedding the people of Poyntzpass attended two funerals.

Those responsible, and those who carried out most of the year's killings, wished to stop the peace process in its tracks. But although these and other killings induced fear and dismay, they never stopped the process: indeed, most of the negotiators closeted in Stormont

The Sinn Féin president, Gerry Adams, lost a family member during the year, when his niece's husband was killed by loyalists. A Sinn Féin colleague, Alex Maskey, was almost killed several years earlier when loyalists blasted him with a shotgun, causing him to lose half a kidney, half his stomach and part of his bowel.

With histories such as these, the talks were never going to be easy, or friendly, or quickly resolved; and so it proved. There was much obstruction, much dislike and great distrust. Yet they stayed at the table and in the end achieved what many had thought impossible: agreement.

On 10 April, most of the par-

controversially, prisoners from subscribing paramilitary groups could expect release within two years.

It was an extraordinary and possibly historic document since, if it works, it will provide a new template for co-existence in Northern Ireland. The document's emergence triggered a period of intense political activity, with dual referendums north and south of the border, quickly followed by elections to a new Belfast assembly.

The northern referendum and the elections produced a near-identical result, with just over 70 per cent voting for the new accord. Clearly not everyone had signed up: well over 90 per cent of nationalists were in support but, within the Unionist community, a bare majority was in favour.

That division within Unionism has helped to ensure that the decommissioning issue, which is essentially a metaphor for mistrust of republicanism, continues to beset the process.

The anti-agreement loyalists believed they had found, in July's Drumcree marching confrontation, an issue that would both assert Protestant parading rights and, with luck, dash the agreement as well. But it all went wrong for them when a petrol-bomb attack burnt to death three young boys. After that horror most of the protesting Orangemen went home, though a hard core of Portadown loyalists say they will never give up. They seem to mean it for even yesterday, Christmas Day, some remained camped out in that frosty field, saying they will wait for as long as it takes to get down the Catholic Garvaghy Road.

The "Real IRA" a break-away from the main organisation, also resolved that it would never give up and kept up a campaign of bombings, which culminated in the Omagh atrocity. It very quickly became evident that the killings had swept away much of the lingering tolerance for violent acts. Just as the Good Friday Agreement transformed politics, so Omagh seemed to spell the end for large-scale terrorist campaigns.

Since then, there have been Nobel peace prizes – for Messrs Hume and Trimble – negotiations and more negotiations. None has been easy, but the desire for peace is palpable, and that is the most hopeful factor in suggesting that next year's crises too will be overcome.



Nobel Peace Prize winners David Trimble, left, and John Hume, in Oslo for the award

seemed to strengthen their resolve not to be deflected.

This was true even though the violence reached right into the talks building itself, touching key negotiators. The Ulster Unionist MP Ken Maginnis, a former member of the Ulster Defence Regiment, sat across the table from Sinn Féin, many of whose representatives had served time in prison for IRA offences. Mr Maginnis lost several close friends, shot or blown up by the republicans.

Gary McMichael, leader of the Ulster Democratic Party, political wing of the Ulster Defence Association, had lost his father to an IRA booby-trap bomb, and at one stage was himself an IRA target. The SDLP, led by John Hume and Seamus Mallon, had also suffered. One of their members, Paddy Wilson, had been killed by the UDA in the 1970s; the man who killed him sat with them in the talks, having served a life sentence and been released.

ties signed up to the Good Friday Agreement after a marathon overnight session. Unionists and republicans both had major reservations, yet in the end the Unionist leader, David Trimble, and Mr Adams felt they could sign up to the new accord. It was nobody's first choice but most felt they could live with it.

A complex document full of checks, balances and trade-offs, it set out a blueprint for a new constitutional settlement. There would be a new assembly in Belfast, headed by an executive formed by the largest parties; there would be new north-south institutions and new arrangements linking Belfast with Scotland and Wales.

All parties promised to work towards arms decommissioning while new commissions would study future policing requirements and the need for emergency legislation. New bodies would safeguard human rights and equality while, most



Mo Mowlam: Her pursuit of a peace agreement took her into the Maze prison, to win over loyalist prisoners

France gives itself a helpful kick in the pants

THE WORLD CUP BY JOHN LICHFIELD

THE Arc de Triomphe was built to celebrate a different, bloodier kind of victory.

None the less, walking past it nowadays, one almost expects to see a new name engraved alongside the inscriptions of Austerlitz and the other battles: "Stade Saint Denis 1998".

On the night of 12 July, the famous old arch was turned into a projection screen for electric-green, laser-painted faces of the French footballers who had just won the World Cup.

Each face and each name – but especially that of Zinedine Zidane – drew a huge cheer

from the crowds blocking the Champs-Élysées.

The next day more than a million people – five times the number who watch the entire French First Division on a good weekend – blocked the avenue from top to bottom to catch a glimpse of their brown, white and black heroes.

This was a family festival, a national festival. There were babies in prams with their faces painted red, white and blue; there were poodles with tricolours pinned on their collars. Most startling of all, there were white, brown and black Frenchmen and women

jostling happily side by side. Arab youngsters from the suburbs were waving the French flag, probably for the first time in their lives.

France has always been a country in which politics is made on the streets. The crowds that turned out to celebrate the French victories in the World Cup semi-final and final were the largest on the streets of Paris since the Liberation in 1944. They were the most politically significant since the student revolts of 1968.

Politically significant? Six months later, the claim may seem hard to substantiate. The French economic recovery is beginning to stutter – although the boom in domestic spending encouraged by the World Cup victory has saved the country from worse problems.

The traditional winter violence in the troubled suburbs of

French cities has broken out once more, though so far not as seriously as last year.

Can the implosion earlier this month of Jean-Marie Le Pen's far-right, racist National Front be the doing of Zinedine Zidane, star of the French team and the son of Algerian immigrants, born in the troubled, northern suburbs of

Marseille? Would that life were so simple.

The significance – the political significance – of the World Cup victory is real none the less. It snapped a negative, inward looking national mood, which was long overdue for snapping. It allowed French people to celebrate being French, without complexes. It allowed them to reject the cheap anti-immigrant propaganda of the NF. It enabled them to reject the defeatism of the French intellectual left.

There is, or was, a conviction in France that the country was doomed to decline in the modern world, in spite of the fact, or even because of the fact, that it is more cultured than the rest of the planet.

Part of the significance of the French World Cup victory is that it was based on hard work, muscle, multi-racialism and team work as much as traditional Gallic flair. Another part is that it was founded on players, who blossomed after going abroad, without losing their Frenchness.

On a recent visit to one of the troubled inner suburbs of

Paris, I asked a football-mad, second-generation Algerian what the World Cup victory had meant for France. "On one level, nothing," said Hammer, a 33-year-old, youth worker. "All the problems here are the same as before. On another level, everything."

"For the kids here to see a man like Zidane starring in a team which looked, racially, like a group of youngsters on these streets, it gives them some hope that they, too, can make something of their lives."

That alone is worth a new inscription on the Arc de Triomphe.

SOUNDBITE OF 1998

"It depends on what the meaning of 'is' is" Bill Clinton

Slump that gave us all the shivers

THE WORLD ECONOMY
BY HAMISH MCRAE

FOR THE world economy, it was a year of astounding contrast and much confusion.

For a start, more than one-quarter of the world plunged into recession while the rest cantered blithely on. So much for there being a single global economy.

It was the year when many countries experienced deflation, yet the falling prices of goods in the shops were in stark contrast to the soaring price of shares on the financial markets.

Despite a serious wobble in August, most markets ended the year higher than they had begun. And it was a year when strings of companies across the developed world merged and announced job losses, yet in those same countries unemployment fell and total employment continued to rise.

So it was not a bad year, unless you lived in East Asia. For those parts of the world economy that went down, the scale of the catastrophe was far beyond anything in post-war memory. The slump in East Asia was, for most people in the region, their first experience of recession. Although the first signs of slump were evident in mid-1997, hardly anyone glimpsed how bad the downturn might become.

A year ago Japanese officials were still proclaiming that the economy would grow this year, albeit slowly - the official Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development forecast was for 1.5 per cent growth. The outcome looks like minus 2.6 per cent, with no end of recession in sight.

Or take Hong Kong. Flush with the self-confidence of the handover to China, Hong Kong thought it could avoid recession altogether. Now it has had its

first recession since the war with the economy shrinking by nearly 5 per cent.

For some other countries of the region the tale has been truly dreadful. The saddest case must be Indonesia, where the economy has shrunk by over 15 per cent, and domestic consumption has fallen by nearly one-third. Russia, another economic disaster zone, has seen its output fall "only" 7 per cent this year.

The other extreme was the United States. Could the boom continue into its eighth year? The answer was a resounding yes. The US economy has grown by 3.5 per cent. Unemployment has fallen, inflation has stayed low and crime has fallen too. It is the so-called "Goldilocks economy" - not too hot and not too cold, but just right.

Here in Britain we have had a modest success. There was no recession. The economy has grown by 2.7 per cent (against a forecast 2.2 per cent). Inflation has been lower than forecast, more jobs have been created and the current account has been more or less in balance.

It has been a good year for most of continental Europe too. Both Germany and France have had a year of low inflation and enough growth to start cutting into double-digit unemployment rates. Ireland, Sweden and Spain have done better still.

One common feature round the globe was deflation. Prices in Japan have been falling for years but in the past year the phenomenon spread. Even in Britain, where the Bank of England was repeatedly jacking up interest rates in an effort to cap inflation, some prices have been falling, including phone calls and clothes.

Old dictator shakes the world again

PINOCHET, BY KIM SENGUPTA

WHAT STARTED with another routine shopping trip to London for General Augusto Pinochet suddenly began to go horribly wrong. On 16 October, as he lay recovering from a minor back operation, the former Chilean dictator received a visit from Scotland Yard. He was under arrest because of an extradition request from Spain on charges of mass murder, torture and kidnapping.



Pinochet: Saga of twists, passion and pathos

Thus began a saga with extraordinary twists, passion and pathos. What had happened in Chile 25 years ago has led in Britain to a fierce debate, pushing aside the politics of the centre and bringing back the old divisions between left and right.

In the immediate aftermath of the arrest, Peter Mandelson became the unlikely hero of the left by saying it was "gut wrenching" that "such a brutal dictator" should be claiming automatic immunity. This was, however, the first and last public cry from the radical past of New Labour. From now on the party line was that it was a purely legal matter.

Past and present Conservative politicians, on the other hand, were outraged. Baroness Thatcher demanded that General Pinochet be freed at once. William Hague and his front bench, after a bout of initial dithering, took up the cry.

There was apprehension in Washington that an open trial could lead to a public airing of the CIA's role in the Pinochet coup.

The legal process began with the High Court ruling in

favour of immunity but then the House of Lords voted by three to two that the former dictator should face justice. Then that decision was overturned because Lord Hoffmann had failed to disclose his links with Amnesty International.

So legally we are now almost back to square one. But it would be wrong to think nothing had changed. Jack Straw resisted great pressure and refused to free the general, becoming a second unlikely hero of the left. According to opinion polls, his decision to let the legal process continue has been popular.

General Pinochet's opponents are exploring other legal avenues, including the possibility of trying him for torture under the Criminal Justice Act. And there is nothing to say the next panel of the lords will not also rule against him. The one salient lesson of the Pinochet affair is to expect the unexpected.

SOUNDBITES OF 1998

'It was inevitable the Titanic was going to set sail, but that doesn't mean it was a good idea to be on it'
William Hague on joining the single currency



Left, a Brazilian trader reacting as the Sao Paulo stock market takes the fallout from Russia's turmoil.



Right, a Muscovite checking her ever-shrinking money

Reuters

Indeed, producer prices are lower in most countries than they were a year ago. Companies that used to jack up prices whenever costs rose have found they can no longer do this - and thus a wave of fear has been sweeping through the business world. One way in which that fear has manifested itself is in mergers. It is not the only reason for the mega-mergers, but a principal one. The areas affected - including oil, cars and banking - were those where competitive pressure has been strongest. Suddenly, giant companies such as Chrysler and Mobil felt they needed to merge to ease the pain of downsizing. That pain is being felt by their staff. Here in Britain the City has been hard hit by job losses in the fall-out from bank mergers, but the phenomenon is nationwide and worldwide. Fortunately, in most countries growth was strong enough to absorb the people laid off.

Financial markets found this confusing. On the one hand slower inflation encouraged a fall in long-term interest rates. But growing evidence of a squeeze on company profits, with bad oews on Russian debts, led to jitters in August that saw share prices in most markets fall by as much as 30 per cent.

The volatile markets caused some casualties, most notably the near-collapse of the US fund managers Long-Term Capital Management (LTCM).

The annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in October took place in an atmosphere of crisis. World prosperity seemed fragile. Then - quite suddenly - the jitters seemed to be over. LTCM was rescued and share prices recovered.

The year has ended with concerns ringing as loud as expressions of confidence. The main worry of 12 months ago continues: could the rest of the world catch the East Asian disease? But now there are new ones. Will the euro be a success? Is the millennium bug a threat? Will Britain hit recession? My guess is that 1999 may turn out better than many people fear. I am more worried about 2000.

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We thought about little else for 12 solid months

THE YEAR OF SEX BY ANN TRENEMAN

SEX MADE headlines in 1998 as never before. It was the year of Viagra and Bill Clinton's cigar on the wilder side of Clapham Common. The year when parents everywhere struggled to explain to children exactly what oral sex might be and that, no, it has nothing to do with flossing. It was a year when mothers turned to daughters to ask about the new facts of life. "So what exactly is phone sex, dear?" they inquired as we tried to change the subject.

In fact, looking back over the year, this was not just the Year of Sex. This was the Year of Unremitting Sex. And, because life is kind to headline writers, there was also more than a little bit of Drugs thrown in and - thank you George Michael and Mick Jagger - some Rock and Roll too. In the end, everyone was trying to get in on the act. Even Tony Blair, the ultimate non-sex machine, claimed in his Mansion House speech that economic stability was sexy. But we knew better than to believe anything so kinky.

And that is the other thing about sex in 1998. It turned out

that the people knew better all along. The politicians cared. Oh yes they did! They apologised and grovelled and wanted to explain. And the pundits cared too. Oh yes they did! They wanted us to know exactly how many gays are in the British Cabinet. "Are we being run by a gay mafia?" demanded The Sun on 9 November. The answer came back quickly. It was not "yes" or "no" but "who cares?"

At first it all seemed a bit of a joke and, between Viagra and Zippigate, there was no shortage of those. Freud would have approved. Viagra was introduced in America in April and quickly became an unavoidable topic. Men could not get enough of the stuff. Neither could the media which is, by chance, run by men. We learnt that two-and-a-half million British men suffer from impotence and a search was launched to find them (oddly, none was ever in the room). In the end, they told all. In fact, they wouldn't shut up. Three British couples had Viagra ex-

periences on day-time television. The whole thing was exhausting and probably a very good thing all round.

I'm not sure the same can be said for sex and politics. Bill Clinton's problems began on 21 January when The Washington Post reported that independent counsel Kenneth Starr was investigating whether the President had an affair with an intern. Soon we knew her name and it was Monica. The name will never be the same. Nor will we. In the beginning there was confusion.

There was quite a lot of talk that this was not actually an affair at all. Certainly Bill seemed to believe this. He declared he had never had sexual relations with "that woman". Perhaps he was lying or perhaps he thought that oral sex was not really "sexual relations" as the Bible knows it.

Monica disagreed. She thought it was more than an affair, she thought it was love. This is probably the most under-reported sex detail of

this case. Bill did it for sex, Monica did it for love.

There were periods of respite in late spring and early summer. Things lived up again when George Michael was arrested in April for "lewd behaviour" at the public lavatories in a Los Angeles park.

The Starr report was released in September. It was X-rated. He denied this. He claimed the report wasn't about sex. It was about lying and perjury and hypocrisy. But anyone who could read knew better. There was the unlit cigar, the snapping thong, the "oral-anal contact".

Until the autumn, sex had been mostly a spectator sport in Britain. Then Rod Davies, Secretary of State for Wales, decided to go for a late-night walk on Clapham Common. He resigned without telling us much about what actually happened. He said he was sorry and told the House: "We are what we are. We are all different, the product both of our genes and experiences." The tabloids

tried to turn the clock back. The *Nurses of the World* ousted the Agriculture minister, Nick Brown. No one cared. Then a gay journalist ousted a member of the Cabinet on *Newsnight*. Jeremy Paxman was mortified. Peter Mandelson was not.

By the end of the year the pundits had decided there was too much sex around. I'm not sure that we, the people, care that much. The politicians still don't get that. In America they are killing themselves off in a moralistic frenzy while Bill Clinton's approval ratings soar. In Britain, greed has proved to be more interesting than sex.

In fact, the real story of the Year of Sex is not the dirt and details but our reaction to them. Professor Robert Worcester of Mori says this has been a watershed year in which people showed that they can separate public politics from private lives. Ordinary people seem to understand what their leaders do not: that some things are complicated and personal and, in the end, private.

This was the year when the moralists tried to undo the Sixties - and failed. So far.



That shot of Lewinsky embracing Clinton in 1996, published widely in 1998

The death of Yeltsin's dream

RUSSIA'S CRISIS BY PHIL REEVES

THIS WAS the year in which the West saw the death of its Russian dream. Words such as "reform" and "free market" became as enfeebled as Boris Yeltsin.

A year ago Mr Yeltsin's government and its western supporters could at least handish several concrete achievements. A stable currency. Low inflation. A small, but thriving, stock market. These have now fallen apart.

The end came in August when Russia abandoned its efforts to defend the currency (despite billions of IMF dollars), and defaulted on its internal debt. The banking system seized up, slamming its doors on millions of depositors. The ruble crashed to less than a third of its value. Saddest of all Russians saw their savings and long-delayed wage arrears shrivel away, condemning them

to even more abject poverty.

Only five months earlier Mr Yeltsin had recruited an unheard-of, 35-year-old energy minister to replace his veteran premier, Viktor Chernomyrdin. Sergei Kiriyenko was a picture of a bewildered bank clerk. Yet within weeks, western diplomats were privately hailing his government, with its team of hard-headed market economists, as the most promising in Russia's post-Soviet history.

Not for long. August's debacle led to his sacking. Into his seat came the weathered arch-pragmatist and former Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, and a "nomenklatura" cabinet whose chief characteristics are plodding caution, a respect for Soviet methods, and suspicion

of western remedies. Mr Primakov is now running the show. How could it be otherwise? Mr Yeltsin started the year with a respiratory infection, and was regularly troubled by illness and bouts of confusion. Though he may make it to the end of his term in 2000, history seems certain to show that the Yeltsin era fizzled out in 1998.

So what does 1999 hold? There is precious little cause for optimism. As the rouble printing presses roll, inflation will worsen and, with it, the economic pressure on an already deeply beleaguered population. GDP next year is expected to be about that of Belgium. Corruption shows no sign of abating. And political extremism is

on the rise. The Communists may not have expanded their (frozen) electoral base but they are in triumphant mood, savouring the rout of the pro-western "reformers".

Democracy is making no real headway in Russia's regions. This year saw an attempt to kill Georgia's president, Eduard Shevardnadze; a deeply flawed election in Azerbaijan, and a crackdown on opposition forces in Kazakhstan. The most depressing event came in St Petersburg with the murder of Galina Starovoitova, standard-bearer of liberal democracy.

Was there anything to celebrate? Yes, but not much. Mr Yeltsin hurried the Romanovs with real dignity. Parliament emerged stronger, having de-

feated Mr Yeltsin over his choice of a replacement for Mr Kiriyenko, a positive step in a nation where the constitution vests huge powers in the president.

And, although Mr Primakov is far from the ideal figure to lead Russia from its benighted state, he is not the knee-jerk Soviet, the "hardline spy master" that some in the West portray him to be.

The coming year will see an acceleration in the search for a successor to Boris Yeltsin. The only other candidates who stand a chance are the Communist, Gennady Zyuganov; Moscow's mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, and General Alexander Lebed. But they are much more alarming, to western liberal democratic eyes, than the wily and elderly, but safe, Mr Primakov.

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A feudal epoch drawing to a close

LORDS ABOLITION
BY ANDREW GRICE

THE CHEEKY Christmas card from the Tory Opposition in the Lords shows a cartoon of Tony Blair next to a half-demolished Lords building. A workman tells him: "So far so good, Prime Minister. Now what?" The card was intended to poke fun at Mr Blair's reluctance to spell out his long-term reform plans for the second chamber. Unfortunately, the

joke was on the Tories for most of 1998 as Labour's plans to demolish the rights of hereditary peers had a smoother passage than expected.

Cabinet ministers are convinced that the Tory-dominated hereditaries signed their own death warrants, helping Mr Blair to end 900 years of what he called "feudal domination". Firstly, the Lords threw out

on five occasions Labour's plans for a proportional system at European Parliament elections. The Bill will go through in the new year but the rebellion played into Mr Blair's hands by bolstering his case for removing the hereditaries.

The second event was even more dramatic. Viscount Cranborne, the hereditary peer and Tory leader in the Lords, was

sensationally sacked by William Hague for secretly carrying on negotiations with Mr Blair about repealing 91 of the 750 hereditaries until the Government implemented "stage two" of its Lords reforms.

The row provoked an unprecedented split between the Tory Party leadership in the Commons and the party's 470 peers, most of whom backed

Lord Cranborne. At the heart of the matter was Mr Hague's desire for his troops to show "zero tolerance" of government legislation, and Lord Cranborne's wish to call off trench warfare in return for saving some of the hereditaries. "Hague wanted us to die in the ditch, but most of us just wanted to lie down and pass away peacefully," recalled one

Tory hereditary. Although Mr Hague's aides insist the public admired the "strong leadership" he showed, many Tory MPs and peers believe the fiasco raised new doubts about whether he is the right man to lead the party into the next general election.

Mr Hague's embarrassment may be compounded in the new year, when the Cranborne

plan will almost certainly be added to Labour's Bill to scrap the hereditaries' right to sit and vote in the Upper House.

The Tory leader may seek to regain the initiative by outflanking Mr Blair over long-term reform and is believed to be warning the idea of a fully elected second chamber. Such a move would be opposed by many MPs, since a Lords with more democratic legitimacy would demand greater powers to amend legislation.

Senior Tories are worried that Mr Hague is about to provoke a second Tories' revolt as many Tory life peers would oppose an elected chamber, since they would be out of a job. "It seems Hague is going to make the same mistakes all over again," said one prominent Tory "lifer". "He hasn't consulted us at all, and we are getting very twitchy."

Mr Hague is unrepentant. He is convinced Mr Blair is vulnerable to the charge of wanting a second chamber full of "Tony's cronies". A cabinet committee chaired by Lord Irvine of Lairg, the Lord Chancellor, has discussed plans for a house in which only a third of the members were directly elected by the voters. Another third could be elected from among members of the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ire-

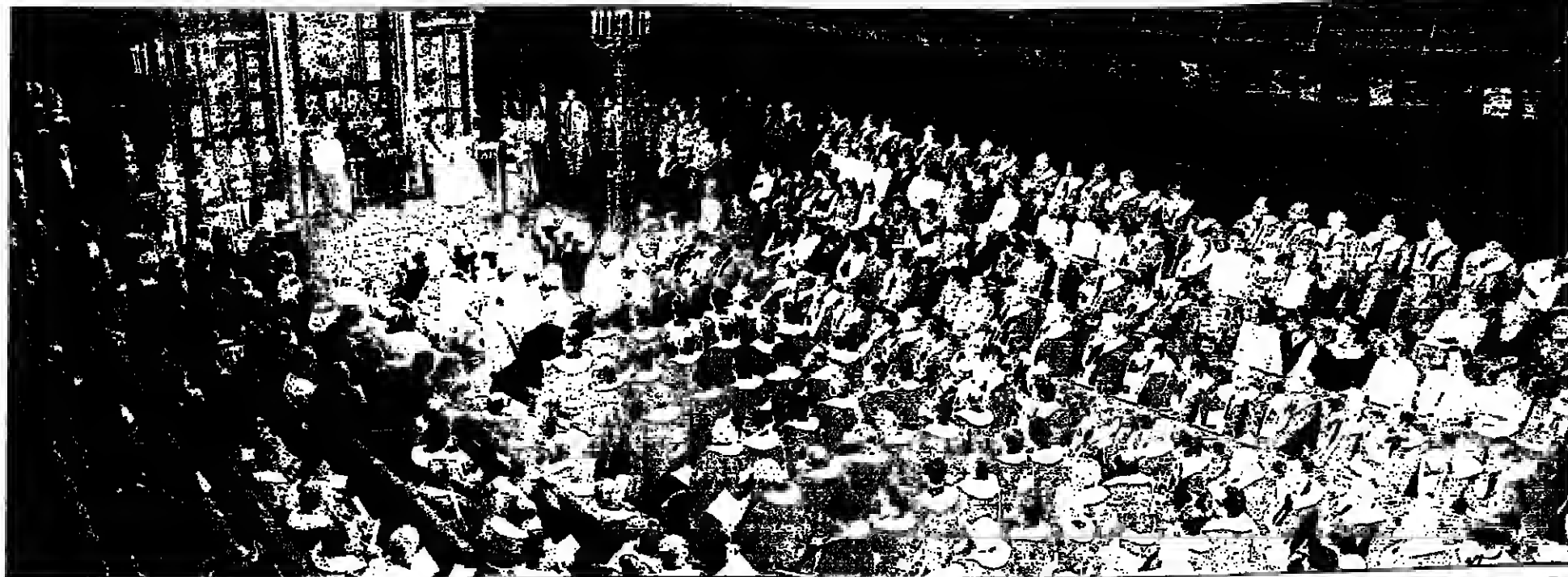
land assemblies to be set up next year, with the rest appointed from the ranks of the present 500 life peers.

But cabinet sources insist no blueprint has been drawn up. Mr Blair is unlikely to declare Cabinet's hand when a White Paper on "stage two" will be published in the new year to avoid the charge of pre-empting the Royal Commission, which will be set up shortly. It should produce proposals within a year.

Another by-product is that the second stage could happen much quicker than expected. Until the Cranborne affair, Labour had virtually ruled out further reform until the hereditaries had been removed after the next general election.

Mr Blair has told Labour MPs he hopes the reform will be on the statute book before the election, but many MPs and peers remain sceptical. Mr Blair is already anxious to avoid the charge of "constitutional overload".

Despite the dramatic events of this autumn, the pace of Lords reform tends to be rather sedate. The hereditaries' rights were supposed to be abolished under "stage two" of the 1991 Parliament Act, which was billed as a "transitional measure" - just like Labour's forthcoming Bill.



The Queen's Speech in the House of Lords in November. A year of trench warfare against Labour may have undermined the case for retaining hereditary peers

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FIAT

Storm that hit the conscience of the world

HURRICANE MITCH
BY PHIL DAVISON



A Honduran family in a shelter made from the remains of their house overlooking Tegucigalpa. David Rose

THROUGHOUT LATIN America, few are talking at the end of this year about Saddam, Bill or Monica. This will always be known as The Year of Mitch.

It was the hurricane they thought would never come but once it did, it became known as the one that would not go away. It was the fourth strongest hurricane on record. By 1 November most of the damage was done but the world barely took notice: this was the Third World and these were the original banana republics.

Three days after the event, we heard hundreds, perhaps thousands, had died in Nicaragua, mostly when a side of Casitas volcano, its crater full of water, collapsed, burying villages. But it was not until a Honduran official spoke of 7,000 dead in his country that the world took notice.

President Bill Clinton at first offered Honduras \$2m or about 20p for every man, woman and child (£1.25m). Long a field of US banana companies, the military and the CIA, it was understandably offended. As floodwaters receded, officials settled on a vague death-toll of about 10,000 but said a similar number were missing, making

Mitch the worst disaster in the western hemisphere since 23,000 died when a volcanic mudslide buried the Colombian village of Armero in 1985.

Mitch's winds first hammered the Bay Islands, off Honduras's north coast, flattening houses on Guanaja Island.

It was on Guanaja that the first cavalry arrived - the British Royal Navy. It will be a long time before the locals forget that the Union Jack was the first foreign flag they saw.

The Royal Navy and the marines were also first into the badly hit "mosquito coast" of eastern Honduras and Nicaragua, using helicopters to reach Miskito Indians trapped by floodwaters.

When it became clear that the floods had destroyed about 100 bridges in Honduras, the US finally stepped in. It sent several thousand troops to repair the country's ruptured infrastructure.

As the Americans laboured through the Christmas holiday, many Hondurans, their mourning period over, hoped the hurricane's legacy may eventually be positive: better roads and bridges, and a country finally on the world's map.

SOUNDBITE OF 1998

"Dear Tony, I can scarcely believe I am writing this letter to you..."

Peter Mandelson's resignation note to Tony Blair

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WAR ON SADDAM BY ROBERT FISK

A man searching the rubble of his Baghdad house, hit by a missile during this month's air raids. *Patrick Baz/AFP*

y a missile during this mon

November 1998

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Danger, daring, surprise, the works

CLASSICAL MUSIC BY MICHAEL CHURCH

THE CURSE of the music scene is its sheer predictability. I've developed a phobia for over-hyped stars, the lumbering orchestral merry-go-round, and all but the most inspired stabs at the exhausted core repertoire. I've heard some fine orchestral concerts, but none sticks in the mind. I've been to recitals by Alfred Brendel, Evgeny Kissin and Mitsuko Uchida, but each served only to send me back to their superlative recordings.

What I do vividly remember – apart from moments of old-fashioned excellence – is danger, daring and surprise. A big hand, then, for the Romanian buskers whose clarinet-and-acordion rendering of Viennese classics kept a Tube-full of passengers entranced between Leicester Square and King's Cross. Let this anonymous pair stand for the unappreciated army who routinely palliate drab city life.

An accolade, too, for the

young cellist Richard Jenkinson, whose recent recital of Brahms, Kodaly and Piazzolla at Southwark Cathedral showed him to be on a par with the ubiquitous Steven Isserlis.

Jenkinson is earning his bread as principal cellist in the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra but stands at the head of another army of unsung heroes: professional musicians prepared to give top-notch concerts free.

Among the more kosher events, two left indelible memories. I never expect to hear a more wrenchingly vivid account of Bach's *St John Passion* than that by New College choir in their natural habitat under the baton of Edward Higginbottom and supported by a brilliant period ensemble. And the opening recital of Louis Lortie's Beethoven cycle – continuing next month at the Wigmore – was so fresh as to have us on the edge of our seats.

But concerts are constricted

by their etiquette: the year's most intense experiences all involved the fusion of music, drama and visual invention, with the most magical being *Shockheaded Peter*. Based on cautionary tales for delinquent German tots, this Grand Guignol extravaganza depended for its frisson on the extraordinary presence of falsettoist Martin Jacques. While the human marionettes on stage did unspeakable things to each other, Jacques gave each grotesque scene a diabolical musical spin. They'll be back at the Lyric Hammersmith in February, and so will I.

This year saw five sensational opera productions, of which three were at Glyndebourne. You couldn't wish for a more perfect Glyndebourne opera than Strauss's *Capriccio*, nor a more perfectly judged production of it than John Cox's 1973 version, back in a stunning revival with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa.

Nicholas Lehnhoff's revived production of *Katya Kabanova* – starring Amanda Roccroft – was no less stunning, visually and vocally.

And in a film-noir staging of Handel's *Rodelinda* (back to repertoire next year) we at last got to hear the fabled counter-tenor Andreas Scholl live on stage, and breathtaking it was. Not merely through tonal purity or technical perfection, but through sheer artistry – the way he shaped his phrases, and the noble musicality of his presence. And this year I saw things done to Monteverdi which should have been disastrous but actually were miracles.

Minimalist choreographer Trisha Brown turned *Orfeo* into an all-dancing dream at the Barbican, while Welsh National Opera extracted raunchy comedy – plus sublime beauty – from the Tarentino horrors of *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. If you don't believe me, watch it on BBC2 on 29 December.



Opera noir: a breathtaking 'Rodelinda' at Glyndebourne

Laurie Lewis

The year of the big squelch

POP BY ANDY GILL

MOMENTS OF the year? There were, to be brutally honest, few notable moments at all in a British pop year dredging the depths of a post-Britpop slump, seemingly bereft of creative momentum at all save for one or two embers of inspiration.

On the performing front, the highlight was probably Corporal Robbie Williams' rallying of the troops in that First World War theme-park known as the Glastonbury Festival of Love, Peace and Mud.

As usual, the best British records came from the crowded intersection of rock and dance, with Fatboy Slim leading the assault with his remixes of Cornershop's "Brimful of Asha" and Wildchild's "Renegade Master", followed by the knockout punch of "The Rockafella Skank", surely the single of the year.

In another damning indictment of British pop's backward nature, there was more decent French pop than British in 1998, thanks to the likes of Stardust, Bob Sinclar, Lo'Jo and Air. One glimmer of hope was provided by Gomez's winning of the Mercury Music Prize, a reflection of the band's imaginative, eclectic approach and a promising indication of a

shift back towards American influences after years of Britpop navel-gazing.

This shift was entirely appropriate, given that 1998 was the year American pop finally dragged itself out of its own protracted slump, by rediscovering the power of its old roots music. American artists from Beck to the Beastie Boys, Lambchop to Sparklehorse, all issued records imbued with a restless pioneer spirit, while Mercury Rev produced the album of the year in *Deserter's Songs*, a haunting, uplifting work that contained a good half-dozen or so of the year's great pop moments.

Apart from that, 1998 was notable mainly for the scumline of flakiness and criminality settling around much of the music industry. George Michael was arrested in Beverly Hills, while back home Ian Brown and Mark Morrison – surely the stupidest men in pop – both found themselves languishing at Her Majesty's pleasure for ego-related obnoxiousness.

Still, at least they managed to get themselves arrested, something few other British acts managed in the sorriest year for pop since Waterman first met Stock and Aitken.

Swinging way out to infinity

JAZZ BY PHIL JOHNSON

AS MISSION statements, manifestos or corporate credos go, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing", might lack a little in gravitas, but nine times out of ten it still does the business where jazz is concerned.

At the Brecon Jazz Festival in August, the diminutive French pianist Michel Petrucci (he has a rare bone disease that has restricted his growth), swung so ceaselessly, so heroically and so mercilessly, that by the end of the performance no one could quite believe what they had seen or heard.

It was less like a concert than a seance or a laying-on of hands, and Petrucci truly did seem to bring the dead back to life. You could almost see Earl Hines, Art Tatum, Phineas Newborn and all the other great jazz piano magicians of the past, standing at the bar looking on and sipping their pints, saying, "Go on my son!" Even the fixtures and fittings in the Market Hall appeared to be expanding and contracting in time to the indeterminate rhythmic bounce of that mercurial swing-thing.

Perhaps this was hallucination, but then much of the con-

cert sounds distinctly unlikely. Did Petrucci really hammer away at just one note of the keyboard for a full 10 minutes, as his finger became a cartoon blur of motion-lines, like Woody Woodpecker's beak? Did he then repeat a single bluesy phrase for another 10 minutes, using not one finger but two? And if so, why did we like it so much?

It was once said of a boogie-woogie pianist that he had a left hand like God. Petrucci has two of them, and maybe another up his sleeve.

After the encores, Petrucci came to the front to hold hands with his bassist Anthony Jackson and his drummer Steve Gadd, his tiny figure reaching somewhere beneath their knees and their thighs. We did not so much as applaud as bend low and bow in obeisance, for the performance was like a glimpse into the infinite. Grown men cried, and you walked out into the hot evening sunshine and the beer-smelling streets with a vision of glory buzzing in your head, and that single Woody Woodpecker note ringing in your ears. Honestly, it was that good.

SOUNDBITE OF 1998

"We mustn't downgrade the Opera House. I don't want to sit next to somebody in a singlet, a pair of shorts and a smelly pair of trainers"

Sir Colin Southgate, Chairman of the Royal Opera

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The world turned the right way up

VISUAL ARTS BY TOM LUBBOCK

IN THE visual arts, it is whole shows that usually get reviewed. But when it comes to reviewing the year, things can be different. The shows have closed and faded. It's single works that glow in the memory. Here are a dozen from 1998, in no particular order. They were all shown in the UK.

The first was a show in itself. *The Palace of Projects* by Ilya & Emilia Kabakov, erected in London and Manchester, was a make-shift labyrinth, filled with masses of earnest, ingenious schemes for the world – a method of punishing household objects, a plan to raise all the dead. *The Palace* was a great joke and more: a work in praise of human wishes, a monument to optimism.

The last paintings of Pierre Bonnard went beyond beauty to new intensities. *Nude in the Bath* and *Small Dog* (1943) in the Tate retrospective, show his now dead wife, Marthe, still bathing as ever. Her imagined body floats corpse-like, dissolving into its liquid cocoon and the painting's sour metallic hues. The whole picture feels drowned. The only clear image is the basset, berally on the bath-mat. Everything may be lost – the dog at least is faithful to the memory.

Claus Cibber's stone sculptures of *Melancholy* and *Raving Madness* (1676) once stood before Bedlam. They were shown in the Science Museum.

These powerful, tormented figures are astonishing, not just for fusing nobility and wretchedness, but as reminders of what public art could once be: an open recognition of life's terrors.

Gloss over the subject of Renato Bertelli's *Continuous Profile of Mussolini* (1933). This object, in "Speed" at the Whitechapel, performs a spectacular paradox. It looks like a high chess-piece. Then you see that its turning edge, all round, is Il Duce's silhouette. Suddenly it's a spinning blur. Or rather, what's odder, there's no deception. It's clearly solid and static. It's a sculpture of a blur.

The glimpse through a doorway to a sun-lit room was the most piercing trick in Pieter de Hooch's domestic interiors, shown at Dulwich Picture Gallery. *A Mother and Child with its Head in her Lap* (1658) is its loveliest example. The front room is shady: a flash of light hits the open door; a square of light spreads on the floor beyond. The device goes deep – into early feelings about the big world opening out beyond you. At the same time it's only household magic. The promised land is the room next door.

Susan Hiller's *Wild Talents* was a haunting video piece, installed in darkness at the top of Berry House in Clerkenwell. It played a dreamy sequence of film-clips showing paranormal happenings, sampled from

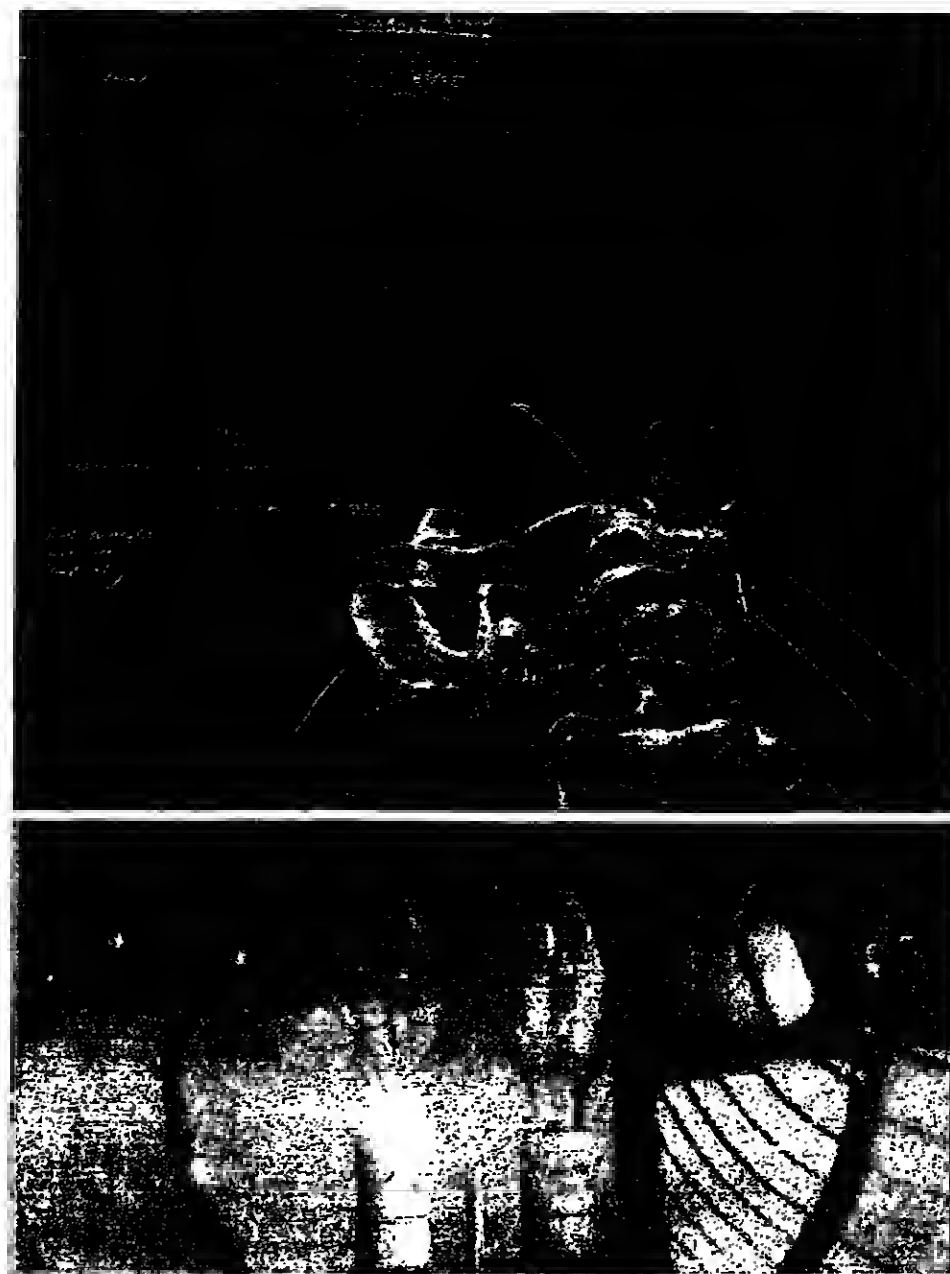
movies such as *Pollergeist*. All questions of reality were suspended. The special effects became pure wonders.

Though she just missed the Turner Prize, Tacita Dean's chalk-on-blackboard drawings, *The Roaring Forties: Seven Boards in Seven Days*, stole the show (Tate). These pictures of sea and ships have a remarkable presence. Their secret is using chalk and blackboard as a tonal medium, as light and dark. The images are phantoms, flashing out of darkness, on the verge of erasure.

Bridget Riley's four screen prints, *Nineteen Greys* (1968) were the real eye-catchers in her show at Abbot Hall, Kendal. They're simply grey spots on grey, but masterfully judged to create multiple surface illusions – of shadow-fall and smoky film, shiny mirroring and deep-cut holes. The effects are lucid but elusive. You can analyse, but you can't blink out of them.

Seen at Art TM in Inverness, David Connear's ink drawings are philosophical investigations, studies in intention. One free-hand straight line is drawn under another, over and over. Each line tries to hug the wandering path of the last, but wanders itself. So a Chinese whisper picture accumulates, whose beautiful patterns are quite unintended, generated only by the hand's error.

Marion Coutts' *London Leisure* was shown and played



'The Roaring Forties: Seven Boards in Seven Days' (top) and 'Disappearance at Sea' by Tacita Dean, who just missed the Turner Prize but stole the show at the Tate

at Riba. It was a set of playable table-tennis tables, but remade – green for green – into the shape and plan of London's central parks; an indoor public sculpture, a knockabout map, and (rare today) an artwork that affirms everyday life. Marc Quinn's *Study for Approaching Plankton Density* 66 Kg was a small mound of metal on the

floor of the South London Gallery: a lead cast of the artist's skin, compacted like dropped trousers. You made out a face and foot in the squish – a folded bog-person, the body reduced to a tablet of itself.

My full stop is Piero Manzoni's *Socle du Monde* (1961), seen at the Serpentine. It's an iron cuboid, on which the title,

"world-plinth", is embossed – upside down. And with that inversion, the world itself is turned upside down. This block at our feet is the planet's pedestal. We stand towards the whole earth as its spectators and makers. In a few square feet it does what a certain dome, opening a year from now, can only dream of doing.

Matters of stupendous moment

THEATRE BY PAUL TAYLOR

WHEN PETER BROOK made his classic statement that "theatre reopens what definition closes", he probably wasn't envisaging the spectacle of two men in suits pretending to be the Prince and Princess of Wales and everyone else associated with their ill-starred marriage.

Yet in its own sublimely silly, rulebook-tearing fashion, the National Theatre performance of Brent's *Love Upon the Throne* is a rapturous illustration of what he means. For as well as being the funniest show of the year, this piece has a curiously touching self-reflexive quality. Hapless inadequates thrust into roles they can't manage play, well, hapless inadequates thrust into roles they can't manage.

So it has a revelatory aspect, too: by highlighting the kinship between the predicaments of an actor and the predicament of a royal. *Love Upon the Throne* exposes the inherent sympathy in theatrical presentations of monarchy, even those designed to be satiric.

Meanwhile, a real eye-opener, or rather ear-opener for me was the intensity of the silence at both performances. I attended the National Theatre's production of *Copenhagen*, my play of the year.

Michael Frayn's profound and haunting meditation on science and morality and the ineffable mysteries of human motivation explores difficult material with a searchingness that simply would not be risked in a television play or film.

In some austere afterlife, a

trio of people re-enacts the enigmatic visit made in 1941 by the German physicist, Werner Heisenberg, to his Danish counterpart and erstwhile mentor, Niels Bohr. This puzzle opens up matters of stupendous moment.

Some complained that it was a treatise rather than a play. But the essence of drama is rhythm and, as Michael Blake-more's production beautifully brought out, *Copenhagen* is built on the recurring rhythms of re-enactment. A dazzling achievement.

The past year has also stretched credulity, on the theatrical front, in several pleasing ways.

A Racine season in the West End? This seemed about as feasible as a Ray Cooney retrospective at the Bouffes du Nord, before the Almeida's Jonathan Kent triumphantly brought it off with Diana Rigg and Toby Stephens. Then again, a solo pig from David Hare? Surely they meant to hook Jackie Mason?

But *Wto Dolorosa*, his reflections on a first visit to the Middle East, was no mere what-I-did-in-the-holidays lecture with slides, nor a lazy substitute for a play.

A gripping dramatic monologue about the ambiguous benefits and penalties of faith, communicated with wit, fire and growing confidence, it managed like many of the best things this year – Sarah Kane's *Crave*, Mark Ravenhill's *Handbag* and the brilliantly baleful junk-opera *Shoeshoed Peter* – to disturb your assumptions about what form a theatrical experience can take.

Great bits, but no pieces

FILM BY ANTHONY QUINN

THERE WERE movies with great things in them this year, although not actually any great movies.

The most startling images came in the opening 25-minute flurry of *Saving Private Ryan*. Steven Spielberg's account of the American D-Day landings at Omaha. No sooner does the ramp on the foremost landing craft drop down than a chattering hail of machine-gun fire engulfs the oncoming marines.

Spielberg gets up close to the impact of gunfire as bullets whistle through flesh, khaki, steel helmets. There is nowhere to hide in this open-air slaughterhouse.

Then comes the moment

when it all seems to freeze, and Captain Miller (played superbly by Tom Hanks) enters a kind of battle fugue, the thunder of the guns slowing and muffling around him: it's a state of abstraction brought on by terror, which certain soldiers on the Western Front also recall after going over the top.

Miller, whose dream-time has lasted no more than four or five seconds, forces himself back into the horrific present. In these moments Spielberg gestures towards an unglamorous truth about men in combat: that real bravery lies not in

gun-toting heroics but in the sheer will to carry on.

It's no discredit to Spielberg that the rest of his film failed to match the gut-churning bravura. Who could follow that?

On a much smaller scale, Brian de Palma ran into a similar difficulty with his conspiracy thriller *Snake Eyes*. The 20 minute Steadicam take that opens the film is an audacious and exhilarating demonstration of film craft, conducting the audience via a crooked cop (Nicolas Cage) right into the heart of fight night in Atlantic City.

Cage holds the centre here as he orbits the fight arena, pocketing bribes, beating up a miscreant and generally wallowing in the glow of his own self-love.

De Palma builds the sequence beautifully, wiring us into the frenzied expectation around the baying auditorium – it's like lions-and-Christians night in Ancient Rome.

Then comes what is my favourite movie moment this year as Cage gets to his feet with a triumphant yell of "I am the king!" On that instant the whole arena rises with him. Glorious fun. *Snake Eyes* thereafter turned into a nugatory join-the-dots thriller.

SOMETHING OLD, something new, something borrowed – the reliable old formula worked again. Yes, I did see something blue too, but that was not a highlight of my year.

The best of the old was Birmingham Royal Ballet's revival of Ninette de Valois's *The Prospect Before Us*, a huge hit during the Second World War but not performed for 30 years because everyone was afraid it would outwork without its original star, the late, great Robert Helpmann.

Well, there isn't really anyone to match his comic exuberance, but the jokes now are given more as an ensemble effort, and how good it was to see David Bintley's company celebrating

DANCE BY JOHN PERCIVAL

the centenary of their founder, Dame Ninette, by presenting such a lively, funny, unback-neged piece, with a story which proved that in the 18th century dancers got up to just as many lively tricks as they do today.

My best new piece also had a female choreographer: Siobhan Davies, who never offers anything so old-fashioned as a story, but does make beautiful dances for her beautiful dancers. She called this work *Eighty-eight* because that's the year she started her company, and also because it is the number of keys on a piano. She set

it to Conlon Nancarrow's highly individual music for player piano. Sometimes mysterious, sometimes jazzy, the outcome was so appealing I was drawn to see it again and again.

The reopening of the new, vastly improved Sadler's Wells Theatre brought joy to the autumn with a series of dance companies: among them William Forsythe's amazing company from Frankfurt. His choreography, taking classical ballet further into the next century than anyone else has attempted, was already admired here, thanks to the Royal Ballet, but

for the greatest delight you need to see his regular dancers making its revolutionary innovations of shape, timing and texture look absolutely natural.

And while London borrowed from Germany, the Edinburgh Festival borrowed three dance companies from Holland to celebrate the highly original Dutch choreographer Hans van Manen. Best of all was the devastating originality of *Live*. This lets its female protagonist start on stage, accompanied by giant video projections of her face or hands before the cameraman pursues her into the street while the enthralled audience sits watching her image walk. So vulnerable, so brave, such magic.

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HELLOS AND GOODBYES BY DAVID LISTER

The sense that many of this year's "hellos" were a form of reinvention was encouraged by one of the technological discoveries of the year: Glasgow University came up with computer-assisted ways of bringing dead Hollywood stars

D LISTER

A black and white portrait of a woman with dark hair, looking slightly to the right. She is wearing a dark, patterned garment. The image is grainy and has a high-contrast, almost stencil-like quality.

Frank Sinatra (left) died, Delia Smith boiled eggs, Salman Rushdie was back, Geri Halliwell swapped stages

back to life on the screen. If you thought Chris Evans getting into bed with John and Yoko was taking a stomach-curdling liberty with social history, wait and see what plans Quentin Tarantino could have for Marilyn Monroe.

It was a year that saw rock music renew its acquaintance with bad behaviour. Unfortunately, that, as it was also the year that cabinet ministers thought they would get trendy. Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott

tried to relive his youth at the Brit Awards and Danbert Nobacon of Chumbawamba threw a bucket of water over him for his pains. Prescott summoned record company chiefs to his office to complain about the insult to him and "the womenfolk" present, a quaint use of language that must have had Mr Nobacon reaching for his dictionary.

If "hellos" were definitely more of a welcome back this year, then at least they came

with a twist in the tail. It was "hello again" to painting as a painter won the Turner Prize for the first time since 1985. But while Chris Ofili was a painter, he at least eschewed anything as reactionary and infra dig as oils or water colours. Why pay for those materials, when there are huckster-loads of elephant dung going begging?

Some "goodbyes" were involuntary, some unanticipated, some temporary. Peter Man

delson and Ron Davies might yet be back. Geoffrey Robinson will probably have a lot of spare time to count his money. David Beckham said a temporary farewell to the England team and popularity for scraping money on an Argentine leg. Paul Gascoigne would, perhaps, have liked to have thrown some money after being forced to say "good-bye" to international football but threw a table lamp instead.

Other "goodbys" were

course, permanent. Linda McCartney showed herself in death to have achieved a level of popularity that might have surprised her, and to be an icon of vegetarian and pro-animal groups, which would have delighted her.

The media lost some of its best known names including Lord Rothermere and Sir David English. And in the ever-affable Lew Grade we surely saw one of the last of the media moguls, who was not only adventurous and shrewd but approachable and good fun.

The approach of a new century was marked by the passing of another larger than life figure, Francis Albert Sinatra. In what serves as an interesting lesson for up-and-coming celebrities, Frank's reluctance to give interviews and tread the chat show circuit means that one of the greatest entertainers of the century—despite biographies and thousands of profiles—has died with us knowing virtually nothing of what he really thought and felt, and with the mystique still in tact.

f That is more than can be

said for poor Yves Montand. The French film legend who said "goodbye" in 1991 had to say a posthumous "hello" when he was disinterred in March for DNA testing to establish a paternity claim.

The most welcome "good-bye" of the year, if we follow an invention from Sweden, will be a farewell to the stuff of nightmares, the dentist's drill. Swedish company MedTeam™ produced a gel that can dissolve rotten parts of a tooth in 30 seconds and leave healthy parts alone, rendering the drill and the gleam in the dentist's eyes redundant. But the most interesting "hello," followed by the quickest "goodbye," was another scientific invention. Sony invented a video camera, the Handycam, which included an infra red detector for seeing at night.

Unfortunately (or maybe not) when used in daylight it saw through people's clothes and made them appear naked. Sony quickly dumped the invention and offered refunds. Yet they failed to find a single person who wanted their money back.

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Cheers! We're a miserable race no longer

THE WAY WE ARE NOW
BY JOHN WALSH

ASSESSING THEIR own happiness does not come naturally to the British. Americans are far better than us at expressing how happy they are at any turn of events. They have daily polls registering minute shifts of delight or dismay at every move President Bill Clinton makes. We get a Mori poll every few months telling us to what new levels of depression British businessmen have sunk.

But the healthy know not of their healthiness, only the sick, as St Matthew's gospel informs us; and thus I wish to propose a controversial thesis: that the inhabitants of the United Kingdom are getting happier, in themselves and about themselves.

Some countries seem able always to speak in one voice, to share national obsessions. Britain's class system has guaranteed that most of its citizens will always be strangers to each other, unable to grasp each other's pleasures, tastes and thought processes. But there are signs that we are becoming more homogeneous. And the more we share enthusiasms and cultural epiphanies, the more we shall feel part of the *bande*, the mass of British

The most expressive moment of the British zeitgeist was on 30 June this year when, 16 minutes into the England vs Argentina game, the teenage Michael Owen raced like a whippet through the Argentine defences and whacked the most perfect goal I have ever seen past Carlos Roa, the Argentine keeper. Although I did not see it then - I was collecting my daughter from a school concert. A private school in Dulwich, south London, is not the obvious place to hear World Cup fever break out, but that is what happened.

Among the bourgeois-as-a-Burberry parents seat-belted their Cordellas and Xerxes into their Galaxys and Espaces, one of them had been listening on the car radio: one penalty, an equalising penalty, then the Owen goal. It was too much. Throwing dignity to the winds, the woman screamed "Two-one! Jesus! Michael Owen!" A mighty ululation rose from throats wholly unused to the terrace chant. It was electrifying.

The World Cup was the biggest and best focus of national feeling in 1998, but far from the only one. And the moments that best captured the zeitgeist were moments in which classes and races and styles of people got mixed up. Remember the green-welly demonstration on 1

March? The Countryside Alliance was more than a gang of blood-sport lovers: it was the massed ranks of rustic Middle England discovering the pleasures of organised protest. Chaps in soft hats asked each other, "Your first demo too, old boy?", shared hip flasks and arranged to lunch at the Athenaeum. They were the liv-

100

SOUNDBITE OF 1998

'We are what we are. We are all different, the products of both our genes and our experiences'
Ron Davies, former secretary of state for Wales

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fore?

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BUSINESS

BRIEFING

Sanofi talks to potential bidders
SANOFI, France's second-largest drugs maker, said on Thursday that it was in talks with potential bidders for its cosmetics and fashion units after LVMH, the luxury goods maker, pulled out of the bidding.
Unilever, the Anglo-Dutch consumer products giant, has said it is interested in the business, which includes the Yves Saint Laurent fashion house and is valued at around \$1bn (£500m). Sanofi wants to sell its beauty division, which last year had sales of \$710m, to focus on pharmaceuticals after its recent takeover of smaller rival Synthelabo.

Jersey European revives flotation

JERSEY EUROPEAN
Airways, the Exeter-based airline owned by Jack Walker (pictured), the former steel baron and current owner of Blackburn Rovers, is back on track for a £100m-plus listing on the stock market next year, after posting profits of £6.1m in the six months to 30 September. Profits were 35 per cent up on the same stage last year and well ahead of the £5.5m total for the whole of 1998/97.
Plans to float the airline, which operates flights to Northern Ireland and France as well as the Channel Islands, were postponed earlier this year after the stock market peaked in July.

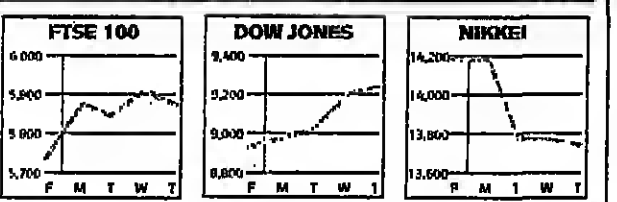
LTCM rescuers could share \$50m

THE PARTNERSHIP that controls Long-Term Capital Management, the hedge fund that had to be saved from collapse in September, could collect end-of-year performance fees of \$50m (£30m).
Under the terms of the \$3.6bn bailout, the controlling partners are entitled to collect 15 per cent of all profits made by the fund after the rescue package was agreed. According to reports, this share could be as much as \$50m.

Funds team up to bid for NIB

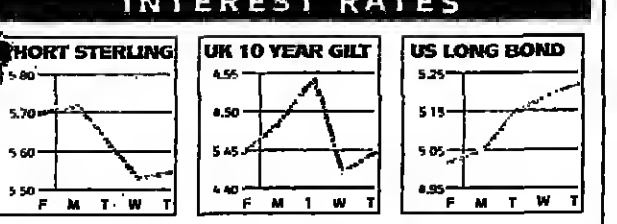
ABP, Europe's largest pension fund, on Thursday teamed up with Dutch fund PGGM to launch a 2bn guilder (£660m) takeover bid for NIB, a niche investment bank part-owned by the Dutch government. The two funds already own 4 per cent of NIB and said they want to buy the state's 35 per cent stake. A spokesman for the finance ministry said the authorities were willing to sell their holdings. NIB has around 25bn guilders of funds under management.

STOCK MARKETS



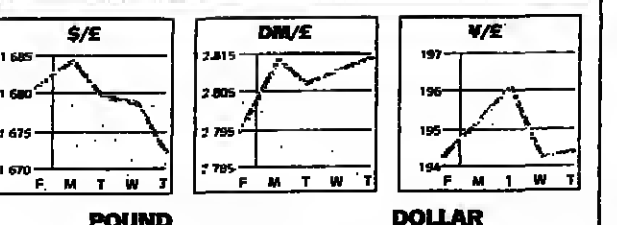
Index	Close	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	YTD (%)
FTSE 100	5962.20	-41.60	6183.70	4599.20	-1.1
FTSE 250	4812.60	-14.80	5270.50	4247.60	-0.8
FTSE 350	2762.50	-15.30	2969.10	2210.40	-1.2
FTSE All Share	2663.74	-13.49	2886.52	2143.53	-0.9
FTSE SmallCap	2052.40	8.00	2793.80	1834.40	4.0
FTSE Fledgling	1135.80	2.90	1517.10	1046.20	0.0
FTSE AIM	792.10	-0.10	1146.90	761.30	0.0
FTSE EBL00	986.58	0.79	1088.00	808.00	0.8
Dow Jones	9212.50	-15.96	9380.20	7400.30	-1.3
Nikkei	13706.73	-72.72	15325.95	12787.90	-1.0
Hang Seng	10292.20	-133.45	13119.26	6944.79	-3.0
Dax	4951.77	-126.39	6217.83	3833.71	-1.7

INTEREST RATES



Index	3 month	6 month	1 year	2 year	3 year	5 year	10 year	15 year	30 year
UK	6.35	-1.34	5.68	-2.00	4.44	-1.76	4.32	-1.85	-
US	5.25	-0.62	5.16	-0.81	4.77	-	5.22	-	-
Japan	0.53	-0.23	0.57	-0.15	2.07	0.16	2.74	0.20	-
Germany	3.31	-0.39	3.18	-0.78	3.91	-1.32	4.81	-1.02	-

CURRENCIES



	at Spot	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6723	-0.58c	1.6451
D-Mark	2.8145	+0.64p	2.9743
Yen	194.46	+0.13	215.94
E index	101.00	0.00	104.80

	at Spot	Change	Yr Ago
Sterling	0.9980	-1.46p	0.6078
D-Mark	1.6830	+0.98p	1.7987
Yen	116.29	+0.45	130.58
\$ index	105.10	+0.00	108.40

OTHER INDICATORS

	Close	Chg	Yr Ago
Brent Oil (\$)	9.96	-0.06	16.99
Gold (\$)	286.15	-0.80	296.45
Silver (\$)	4.91	0.02	6.03

	Index	Chg	Yr Ago
GDP	115.40	3.00	112.04
RPI	164.40	3.00	159.61
Base Rates	6.25	7.25	-

TOURIST RATES

Australia (\$)	2.6340
Austria (schillings)	19.02
Belgium (francs)	55.91
Canada (\$)	2.5137
Cyprus (pounds)	0.7996
Denmark (krone)	10.36
Finland (markka)	8.2960
France (francs)	9.0878
Germany (marks)	2.7197
Greece (drachma)	455.23
Hong Kong (\$)	12.50
Ireland (pounds)	1.0888
India (rupees)	63.93
Israel (shekels)	6.4689
Italy (lira)	2.695
Japan (yen)	189.45
Malaysia (ringgits)	6.0780
Poland (zloty)	0.6071

Mexican (nuevo peso)	14.85
Netherlands (guilders)	3.0502
New Zealand (\$)	3.0793
Norway (krone)	12.45
Portugal (escudos)	276.31
Saudi Arabia (rials)	6.0935
Singapore (\$)	2.6473
Spain (pesetas)	230.08
South Africa (rand)	9.5253
Sweden (krone)	13.08
Switzerland (francs)	2.2147
Thailand (bahts)	55.79
Turkey (liras)	494574
USA (\$)	1.6252

Rates for indication purposes only
Source: Thomas Cook

FTSE dives into red in thin trading

THE UK stock market slumped into the red on Thursday with several traders remaining on the sidelines in the last day before the Christmas break.

The benchmark FTSE 100 index fell in the shortened session with trading so thin that turnover struggled to top 100 million shares.
Despite New York's overnight surge Footsie ended 41.6 points down at 5,962.2. However, supporting shares moved ahead with the mid cap index up 8 points at 4,812.6 and the small cap up 8 points to 2,663.74.
"Opening has been a waste of time, we've been twiddling our thumbs," one stockbroker complained.

British Petroleum, ahead of its merger with Amoco, was the most heavily traded share, achieving a volume of just 4.21 million shares.

The price strengthened 14.5p to 916.5p, the result of some gentle shopping by tracker funds building a position ahead of the Amoco deal.

Diageo, the drinks giant, was the best Footsie gainer as fears LVMH would sell some of its 10.84 per cent stake finally evaporated as the French group gave up its pursuit of the Sanofi takeover bid.

Stagecoach, the bus and coach company, was the best performer in the FTSE 250, rising 4.5p to 254.5p and business support group Hays, helped by investment meetings, rose 6p to 483p.

Weak sales figures from the John Lewis Partnership for last week unsettled retailers with Marks & Spencer, up 9.75p to 408p, and Asda, 3.25p to 159.5p. Next retreated 5p to 480p and Boots 1.04p.

Other retailers to feel a Christmas Eve chill were

Eyecare Products blinked 2.5p higher to 14.5p following an agreed 15p share offer from a company linked to its management. Talks with two other possible bidders have been terminated.

Servisair rose 19p to 174p as possible bidders circled the aircraft support group. Vardon, the leisure operation selling its 23 Sea Life Centres and two dungeon attractions, fell 9p to 137.5p at disappointment with the £47m realised.

Car dealers again responded to the outbreak of takeover activity that has embraced Dagenham Motors and Evans Halshaw.

European Motors moved ahead 6p to 62p and Synter 6p to 156.5p. Incheape, however, reversed 5.5p to 122p.

Silver Shield, the windscreen replacement company that controls third division Swansea FC, held at 1.75p after obtaining planning permission for a £75m redevelopment of the Swansea stadium.

Reflec, the troubled reflective ink maker, returned to market after a near four month suspension, while the yearly report and accounts were completed, at an unchanged 4p.

The shares first arrived nearly three years ago at 40p; they soared to 109p before falling sharply as the company ran into problems.

MSB International, the information technology recruitment group, rose a further 27.5p to 310p.

The shares have climbed 170p since an upbeat trading statement appeared last week. Still they remain well below the 1,047p peak hit in the spring.



On Christmas morning, jobseekers visit a work placement office in Tokyo

Jobless rate in Japan soars to 46-year high

BY LEA PATERSON AND FRANCESCO GUERRERA

SAID IT WAS the first time ever that Japanese unemployment has equaled the US figure.

Experts said the record had little economic significance but was a humiliating defeat for a country once famous for its "jobs-for-life" culture. "I think a meltdown in the lifetime employment system is going to start," said Economic Planning Agency minister Taiichi Sakaya.

The economic gloom had little impact on the Nikkei index, which ended a three-day losing streak on Christmas day. The index closed up 91.22 points to 13,797.95 after Kichi Miyazawa, the finance minister, said the government would not sell its holding of government bonds. The news prompted a fall in bond yields and sparked a rally among financial stocks.

Worries about the health of Japanese banks had led to a 0.53 per cent tumble in the Nikkei on Christmas Eve. Standard & Poor's decision to downgrade seven Japanese banks also hit bank shares, which fell 2 per cent. Most other stock markets were closed for Christmas Day. On Christmas Eve, the Dow Jones had closed up 15.96 at 9,217.90.

Merger threat to steel jobs

HUNDREDS of steel jobs are set to be axed following Thursday's £40m takeover of Co-Steel Sheerness, the steel maker, by rival ASW.

Sources said that there could be up to 250 layoffs among the 3,200-strong combined workforce as ASW, in Cardiff, and Co-Steel, in Kent, strive to slash costs and reduce capacity. The enlarged group may close one of four furnaces and one of five steel mills.

The companies said the Christmas Eve deal would "inevitably lead to job losses" but gave no numbers. Michael Leahy, general secretary-elect of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, demanded an "urgent meeting to see how we can best protect our members' interests while ensuring plants remain viable".

ASW said buying Co-Steel from Canadian parent Co-Steel Inc would "address the fundamental industry problem of overcapacity" and yield substantial cost savings. The group will be the leading steel supplier to UK construction, with over half the market, and a medium-sized player in Europe.

Insiders said the combined company, which will have an annual turnover of about £500m, could save £20m a year by integrating production plants

and administrative functions.

George Duncan, the ASW chairman who is to keep the post in the new group, said: "The intention is that in a very tough market we will be in a stronger position to compete."

The deal was part-financed by venture capitalist Candover, which is set to inject up to £43m in the new company, and will become one of the largest shareholders with up to 54 per cent of the group. The bulk of the holding will be in convertible loan notes - that can be exchanged for shares at a later date. Candover said it would not keep its stake in ASW and was planning to distribute it to several institutions on conversion of the notes.

Candover was understood to have picked the group's new chief executive, Graham Mackenzie, the director-general of the Engineering Employers' Federation. Mr Mackenzie, who will leave the trade body as soon as a replacement is found, is a former chief executive of United Engineering Steels. He will replace Alain Soulas, ASW's current chief executive.

Co-Steel Inc will also be a major shareholder in the new group with up to 38 per cent.

IN BRIEF

Goldsmiths rises on bid talks
SHARES IN Goldsmiths group rose 6p to 170p on Thursday on the back of continued hopes of a bid for the jeweller. The stock rose over 50 per cent above the market price of 112p on Wednesday before the company confirmed "tentative talks" that could lead to a bid.

Eyecare accepts £13.3m offer
EYECARE PRODUCTS, the spectacle and sunglasses maker, has accepted an offer of 15p a share in cash from Kappa, a French company part-owned by one of Eyecare's directors. The bid values the company at £13.28m.

Alstom wins French rail orders
ALSTOM, the Anglo-French engineering group, has won orders worth 1.9bn francs (£211m) from the French railway operator SNCF to provide wagons and locomotives.

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NO Interest

26 APR 1999

Imperial Call can halt grey reign

course is waterlogged and there is more rain forecast. It's a real shame as we had a good card - and this is the fourth year in succession that this has happened."

NEWTON ABBOT	970	980
SEDFIELD	970	980
WOLVERHAMPTON		980

ALL COURSES RESULTS
0891 261 970

Officials at the Devon course inspected the track yesterday morning and decided that racing today would not be possible.

The clerk of the course, Michael Trickey, said: "The course is waterlogged and there is more rain forecast. It's a real shame as we had a good card - and this is the fourth year in succession that this has happened."

WINCANTON	973	983
AYR	974	984
HUNTINGDON	975	985
HEREFORD	976	986
MARKET RASEN	978	988
NEWTON ABBOT	979	989
SEDFIELD	970	980
WOLVERHAMPTON		980

ALL COURSES RESULTS
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New career beckons for Cigar



Allen Paulson (right) with Cigar after his 1996 Dubai World Cup win. *Sporting Life*

THE SECOND most famous cigar in America, the racehorse of that name, could soon be back on the track, but not to race.

The highest-earning thoroughbred of all time proved to be infertile when he retired from racing to the Ashford Stud in Kentucky last year. However, his owner, Allen Paulson, is now close to an agreement with the insurers holding Cigar's \$25m fertility policy that may release him to Paulson's care.

Despite his inability to sire any offspring, let alone one that could come within a furlong of matching his own ability, Cigar, winner of the 1995 Breeders' Cup Classic and 1996 Dubai World Cup, remains a favourite with his owner and with the American public.

His rehabilitation would involve spending a restful retirement from both course and covering shed at his owner's Brookside Farm in Kentucky. Cigar could, however, embark on the celebrity circuit, making guest appearances at racetracks across the United States.

"Every race track I go to people ask me when we're going to get Cigar back," Paulson said. "We've got some big paddocks waiting for him."

Cigar would also spend part of the year at the Kentucky Horse Park - a rest home for celebrity racehorses - along with racegoers and John Henry, both track champions but both denied a scalp at stud by the surgeon's scalpel before their ability was recognised.

Hong Kong, meanwhile, could soon be used as a model for racing in Mongolia. The President of the province, Nat-sagin Bagabandi, recently led a 90-strong delegation to Sha Tin racecourse, where he toured the grandstands and stables and watched the horses working.

Mongol horses were the foundation of racing in Hong Kong. At home they raced up to 30 miles in a straight line but soon adapted to the demands of a conventional circuit.

Edddie Callaghan will miss the holiday racing programme after his injury, but he struck again. He broke his collar-bone for the second time this season - in a schooling accident on Wednesday morning and faces another spell on the sidelines. Callaghan was due to ride at Market Rasen today.

Teeton on brink of leap to the top

The former top jump jockey Steve Smith Eccles analyses today's King George VI Chase



Challenger Du Luc: Carries the hopes of Martin Pipe's powerful yard in the absence of stable companion Cyfor Malta. This quirky character was second to See More Business last year and will be well suited by this tight three miles - especially if he is ridden up with the pace.

Coomie Hill: Gave his jockey, Jamie Osborne, a fairytale comeback win at Ascot - but I cannot see this sure-footed jumper matching strides with the market leaders when the race gets serious.

Escartefigue: Hard to fancy now that Adrian Maguire has abandoned him in favour of his stable companion Mulligan.

Imperial Call: The 1996 Gold Cup winner has been plagued with problems but has been rejuvenated by his new trainer, Raymond Hurley. Mick Fitzgerald has landed a plum ride and should be in the first three.

Mulligan: Formerly a high-class two-miler, Mulligan lost his way last term but ran a cracker in the Tripleprint Gold Cup last time. That form could be better than many give it credit for and he could run the race of his life.

See More Business: His connections have been praying for rain and it could be a case of divine intervention. However, last year's winner may need more than the ground in his favour as he attempts to

emulate former back-to-back King George winners Desert Orchid, The Fellow and One Man.

Simply Dashing: Ran another cracker when the headgear was fitted for the Tripleprint Gold Cup. The bridesmaid in two big chases this season but he will well suited by this longer trip and has to be respected.

Super Tactics: His jockey, Andrew Thornton, who won this race on See More Business last year, thinks the world of this fellow, who is a sure-footed jumper. However, age is not on his side and younger rivals will leave him tapped for toe.

Teeton Mill: Greys have a fine record in this race and this progressive nine-year-old should take the step up from handicap company in his huge stride. Venetia Williams will be responsible for the training performance of the year if the former point-to-pointer succeeds.

Conclusion: The favourite, See More Business, has disappointed me and does not look up to the task, even if the ground comes up soft. TEETON MILL pulverised the opposition in the Hennessy Gold Cup to win by 15 lengths and looks a much safer proposition. I expect Simply Dashing and the Irish challenger, Imperial Call, to be snapping at his heels all the way to the line.

HYPERION'S TV TIPS

12.40: The former French middle-distance flat performer LAWAHIS faces no easy task conceding 5lb to the young-older Uttorexter scorer Jungli, but he landed a touch in such convincing style on his hurdles debut at Haydock that he is likely to be worth following.

1.10: The powerful EXECUTIVE KING is finding his feet over fences and scarcely put a foot wrong when romping clear of a useful field at Lingfield. Geoff Hubbard's front-runner has an ideal partner in Tony McCoy and the pair could reveal the flaws revealed in Spendi's jumping at Cheltenham.

1.45: Tintchev has been dealt a hefty 11lb rise for his effortless Cheltenham win and is not one to take short odds about. There could be better value in DECOUPAGE, who maintained his progress with an improved second to Wahiba Sands at Newbury and has seen that form boosted by Lady Rebecca's easy Cheltenham success. This tighter course looks just what he needs.

2.20: IMPERIAL CALL showed himself a class act by completing a Naas/Punchestown double over distances well short of his best. But it was in narrowly failing to concede 28lb to the smart

Anabatic over 3m at Cork that the 1996 Cheltenham Gold Cup winner confirmed his return to the top bracket. He is a fine sight in full flow and capable of taking lengths out of the erratic See More Business over the demanding back-straight fences. Teeton Mill is the unknown quantity, but this is a new ball game for the Hennessy Gold Cup winner who could easily be rushed out of his usual steady early stride.

2.55: Josh Gifford recently described SOLOMAN as his "new Deep Sensation". Let's hope the Findon handler is still singing this handsome prospect's praises after this tough chasing debut. Gifford should know where he stands after Kuraka's win at Ascot on Saturday.

2.40: The Irish should have a fair guide to their Cheltenham novice chase prospects after the cream of their crop have pitted their talents here. His Song, Pro-malee and Feathered Leader all look exciting, but LANTURN turned in an exhilarating round of jumping to score at Naas and is probably improving faster than his leading rivals. Pat Hughes is convinced he has a Festival candidate on his hands.

10-YEAR-TO-LEAD ON THE KING GEORGE											
Year	98	99	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98
Fate of the favourites:	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Winner's place in betting:	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Starting prices:	1-2	4-6	8-10	10-1	6-9	9-2	10-1	11-4	5-13	10-1	10-1
Winners' ages:	9	10	11	6	7	7	8	8	8	7	7
Profit or loss to £1 stake:	Favourite: +£378	Second: Favourite: -£325									
Percentage of winners placed 1st, 2nd or 3rd in last race:	70%										
Shortest-priced winner:	Desert Orchid (1988)	1-2									
Longest-priced winner:	Algon (1984)	16-1									
Top trainers:	F. Doumen - The Fellow (1981 & 1982), Algon (1984)										
	O. Bewern - Desert Orchid (1988, 1989 & 1990)										
Top jockey:	R. Dwyer - Desert Orchid (1988 & 1989), One Man (1985 & 1990)										

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Hill faces mission improbable

Bath blow as Swift departs

BY ANDREW BALDOCK

STRUGGLING BATH have suffered a major setback with the resignation of Tony Swift as the club's non-executive chairman. The former England wing, one of Bath's heroes during their glory years, has stepped down for family and business reasons. He was Bath's chief executive during one of the most turbulent times in the club's history when their former coach Brian Ashton and director of rugby John Hall left the club in quick succession two years ago.

Bath are currently reeling from five successive Allied Dunbar Premiership defeats, their worst ever losing sequence, and Swift's departure will be viewed as a major loss both by players and supporters. "Tony has decided that he needs to devote more time to his young family, as well as his business commitments," said the Bath general manager, Bob Calleja. "We respect his decision and would like to thank him for his past services. Tony has made it clear that he will continue to offer his total support to Andrew Brownword, Andy Robinson and Bath Rugby."

Brownword, the club's millionaire backer, will be anxious for an upturn in fortunes in the new year while coach Robinson must prepare his team for a make-or-break Tetley's Bitter Cup tie at Newcastle on 9 January. If Bath lose in the north-east it will almost certainly end their quest for domestic silverware with four months of the season remaining.

Leeds are almost certain to appeal against a four-point deduction for fielding the Australian rugby league player Wendell Sailor before his registration was accepted by Twickenham. The English Rugby Partnership are believed to have handed out the points deduction and although Leeds are yet to have received official notification they are likely to pursue the matter.

Leeds chief executive Gary Hetherington said: "If it's true that we've been deducted four points it's fairly likely that we would appeal. We feel we have a strong case. We did everything we could and all along took professional advice."

The Tykes have not lost a league match since Sailor's arrival in late October, but the points deduction would leave them in relegation trouble without any hopes of promotion.

The Brisbane Broncos, who are being forced to play as an amateur because the RFU refuse to accept his work permit, is due to fly back to Australia at the end of January. Meanwhile, Leeds have signed Jonathan Scates from rugby league side Bradford Bulls.

The Ireland international No 8 Eric Miller will return to Leicester next Tuesday when the Tigers entertain the Barbarians. Miller, who left Welford Road to join Terenure College in Dublin, will turn out in a team containing 11 full internationals, including Scotland's Craig Chalmers and Scott Hastings.

Ulster's game is put back

THE EUROPEAN Cup semi-final between Ulster and Stade Français has been put back to Saturday 9 January after the French club objected to playing on the previous Friday night.

The Stade Français president, Max Guazzini, faxed the tournament director, Roger Pickering, with a letter of complaint on Tuesday, saying that playing on Friday 8 January would prevent the match being shown on French television. Guazzini also claimed that the Ravenhill ground was too small to stage such a high-profile game, but Pickering alayed those fears by announcing that extra seating had been arranged.

"After protracted negotiations it has been decided to change the date and kick-off time of the European Cup semi-final between Ulster and Stade Français from 7.15pm on 8 January to 1pm the following day," Pickering said. The change of plan means that French rugby supporters can get a double dose of live rugby action with Cokier's meeting Perpignan in Toulouse in the other semi-final.

RUGBY UNION

BY DAVID LLEWELLYN

THE MISSION looks impossible but they have accepted it. Gloucester have to start winning away with regularity - otherwise they will self-destruct before the end of the season.

Absymal does not begin to cover their record at the moment. Gloucester are suffering from a chronic bout of homesickness that has seen them win just three Allied Dunbar Premiership matches away from fortress Kingsholm since the start of last season - a total of 16 fixtures.

What is worse is they have to travel to Wasps tomorrow where their record in the league makes for even grimmer reading. Eight visits (shared between Sudbury and Loftus Road) and not a single victory.

A ninth defeat will set them alongside Harlequins for possession of the worst away record in the history of the league. No wonder Richard Hill, their diminutive director of rugby, has had an anxious Christmas.

"Our away form is something we are addressing very seriously," said Hill, with a note of desperation in his voice. "We have to find a way around it and all our efforts are being poured into finding a solution. But in the end it is just an attitude of mind. If all 15 players have total self-confidence on the pitch it will be fine. Gloucester

are never going to be anything more than a reasonable mid-table side if we don't win away from Kingsholm."

It is bizarre that Gloucester currently have a tendency to out-play their opponents for the first 40 minutes, then obligingly let the opposition back into the game and invariably cede all advantages and, ultimately, victory.

They have had their problems. Long-term injury to their talented England prop Phil Vickery threatens his career and there are a clutch of other indispositions. Also, as Hill admitted, the 26 players are still trying to come to terms with the squad system. "It has been difficult for a player who, fitness permitting, has been first choice for two or three seasons

suddenly to find himself on the bench," explained Hill. "But because I have quality players in just about every position I have the luxury of being able to pick an in-form player."

Mark Mapletoft is an example of that. He was ousted at fly-half by Simon Mannix back in November but, after coming off the bench to score 13 points last week, he starts against Wasps. "Mark has found it hard," said Hill, "but I think he is a better player for it. The squad has to learn to replace the verb 'dropped' with 'rested'."

For all that, Hill admitted: "I can't say I am optimistic about the outcome of the Wasps match. But if they put in the sort of gritty performance that they managed against Leicester it

will be a start. We have every reason to want to beat Wasps. They beat us at Kingsholm earlier this season in the fourth minute of injury time and the players should be desperate to beat them for that reason as well as ending this away run."

It is a big responsibility for lock Rob Fidler, who captains the side for the first time in a Premiership match. Of the other Premiership games tomorrow Harlequins must fancy their chances against Sale, particularly since captain Zizan Brooks is expected to have recovered from flu. His All Black colleague John Schuster is another reason why Quins are favourites. Schuster has become the first player to pass 200 points for the season

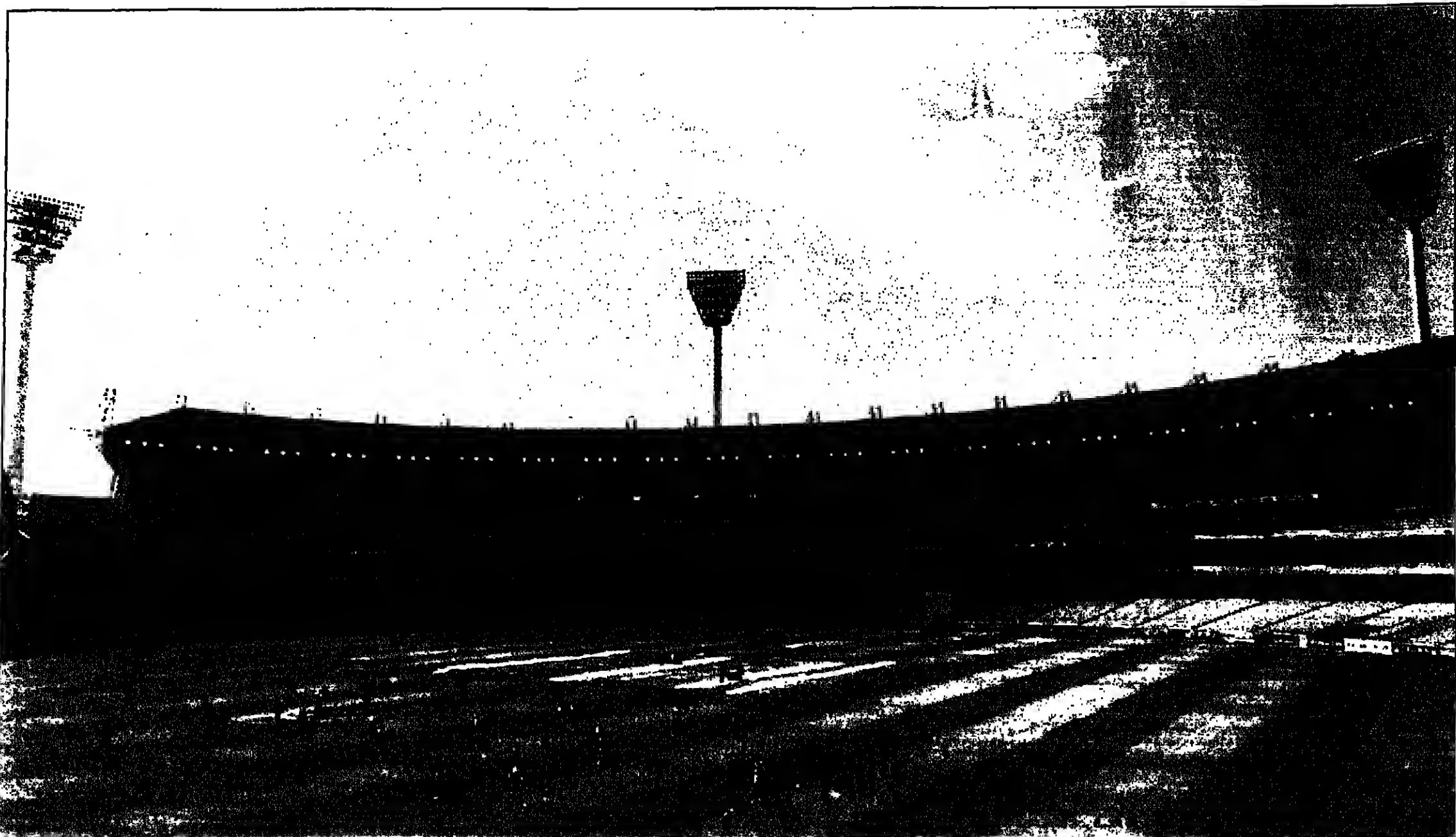
with a remarkable 69 successful kicks out of 80. Sale could well look to David Rees, the England wing, to beat up their defence, which conceded five tries at Newcastle last week.

Saracens entertain struggling London Scottish at Watford - a match that kicks off at 3.15pm - and will be giving the Argentine prop Roberto Grau and South Africa-born, England qualified, centre Jeremy Thomson fitness tests. Both are rated doubtful.

Today leaders Leicester line up against Bedford with an unchanged side from that which came away from Kingsholm with a satisfying win last week. That means no Joel Strassky, Will Greenwood or Nnamdi Enzileke.

Bedford drop full-back Sam Howard and bring in wing Ben Whetstone in his place, while centre Joe Ewens makes way for Dan Harris.

In the other Boxing Day match Richmond are again without captain Ben Clarke, who has a fractured cheekbone, when they take on London Irish at Reading, a fact which does not help their chances against a formidable Exiles team. Irish are again without back row dynamo Isaac Rea'umati (knee) but they are the form side and, having gone close at Sunbury, there is every chance, now that they have been bolstered by the arrival of the likes of halfbacks Steve Bachop and Kevin Puit, that they will emerge victors.



England's players practising at a deserted MCG yesterday. The atmosphere is expected to be completely different inside the 100,000-capacity stadium over the next few days

Winston Byrnoth

Where beer and meat pies top the menu

IN MELBOURNE it is known simply as "The G". To the rest of us it is the world's largest cricket stadium, able to seat a massive 100,000 people, nearly half of them in the monolithic Southern stand. Playing cricket against Australia is always an experience in Melbourne, especially on Boxing Day, and it is one that stays with you for life. England were due to experience it for themselves with the start of the fourth Test this morning.

During my playing career I graced The G's turf six times, four of them one-day matches, including the World Cup final against Pakistan in 1992. On that occasion a world record crowd of 90,000 turned up, though the intimidation aspect of playing in front of so many (Lord's holds 27,000) was diluted without the presence of Australia, who had already been knocked out.

This was not the case in 1983 when England played here in a World Series match. Even

CRICKET

BY DEREK PRINGLE
in Melbourne

though it was a rain-reduced match, 83,000 were present, the previous record before the World Cup final. The noise was terrifying and every time Allan Border or John Dyson struck a boundary - which was often as the 15-over rule was in use here even then - the sheer volume made your head feel as if it was about to burst. It is the modern equivalent of the Coliseum and great pockets of air felt as if they were being shifted by vocal power alone.

Communication, other than by sign language, was impossible and most other senses were too numbed to allow rational thought to be applied. Not surprisingly, despite my managing to run Border out, England lost.

Melbournians are renowned for their love of

sport. However, Boxing Day at The G is a tradition that embraces not only Melbourne, but also the rest of Australia and even beyond. Indeed, Aussies from as far away as Singapore and the Gulf have flown back especially to take in the action. Last year, against South Africa, 72,000 turned up, despite the appalling weather.

Taylor to lead Australia in Caribbean

MARK TAYLOR yesterday vowed to extend one of the most successful stints by an Australian cricket captain on next year's tour to the West Indies. Taylor, 34, had previously only committed himself to the current Ashes series against England.

But while preparing for the fourth Test against England, he said he wanted to settle one personal challenge in an extraordinary career.

Taylor is determined to rec-

vert back to full strength brands on days two, three, four and five. Even so the caterers expect to shift well over 250,000 litres of the stuff, along with 10,000 litres of Coke.

Meat pies are also something of an institution at the MCG and 30,000 are expected to have been shifted by stumps on the first day. During the same

Test in 1982 one of them found its way into Ian Gould's hair as he patrolled the boundary. Gould, who was England's 12th man and fielding in front of the then infamous Bay 13, managed to keep his cool. Turning to face his tormentor, and feeling humour was perhaps the best option, he said: "Steady on mate, I only had me barnet done the

other day." The reply chorused by the rest of the bay, was unprintable, and in the true Christmas spirit of giving, several more pies travelled his way.

In fact Gould and England had the last laugh, and he brilliantly caught Greg Chappell at cover point, a dismissal that was crucial in helping England, in spite of a heroic last wicket stand between Border and Jeff Thomson, to squeeze home by three runs. Incredibly about 15,000 people turned up to watch what could have been just one ball's cricket on the final morning. But then this is the optimistic nature of Australians.

When England lost to the West Indies in Trinidad last February the team watched a re-run of that match, partly for something to do and partly for inspiration. Whatever the perceived wisdom of such exercises, England won the next Test - an achievement they would give a lot to match over the next few days.

pick me. I'm still enjoying playing and the side is playing well with me as captain so provided those two things are maintained I will keep playing."

Meanwhile, the former Australian Test player Dean Jones has said he will name an international cricketer who he claims helped organise an approach by illegal bookmakers on the 1992 tour of Sri Lanka. Jones will tell a new Australian Cricket Board inquiry into het-

ting in the game the name of the player who was with him when a bookmaker offered £25,000 for information about team changes and pitch conditions. The cricketer is neither Sri Lankan or Australian, Jones said. He would not comment on whether it was Indian all-rounder Manoj Prabhakar, about whom allegations have been made but who has consistently denied links with cricket's betting underworld.

Cronje warns against complacency

IN SOUTH Africa's ever-changing social and political landscape, Boxing Day has become the Day of Goodwill. However, the nation's cricketers have been cautioned not to take the new name too literally as they start the third Test match against the West Indies here today.

They are already 2-0 ahead in the series of five Tests and, with their opponents in obvious disarray, the prospects of an unprecedented 5-0 clean sweep have been repeatedly trumpeted in the media.

The South Africa captain, Hansie Cronje, and his players have reason to be more wary. Leading 1-0 in their series in England last summer, they were only denied an extension of their advantage by tail-end resistance at Old Trafford, after

BY TONY COZIER
in Durban

which they lost at Trent Bridge and Headingley. It was a reversal that has served as a salutary warning.

"They have five match-winners in their team who could turn any game around so we are not going to be complacent," Cronje said. "I can't comment on their state of mind or the atmosphere in the camp since I haven't been following them since the second Test, but one thing we can't afford to do is believe they are unable to bounce back."

Cronje is about the only one who has felt constrained to express an opinion on the plight of the West Indies, whose cricket throughout the tour has been abysmal. They are yet to win a

first-class match and, in addition to their defeats in the two Tests, lost to Free State, who achieved a winning second-innings target of 438.

They touched rock bottom in the second Test, when they folded for 121 in 37.3 overs and 141 in 38.2 overs and lost by 178 runs in barely more than two and a half days' cricket.

That prompted media speculation of rifts within the team and angry criticism back in the Caribbean, where a series against a still all-white South African team in the erstwhile home of apartheid has implications beyond the boundary.

The pitiful performances of players whose pre-emptive strike over pay and conditions initially placed the tour in jeopardy has heightened the public wrath.

Brian Lara's reinstatement as captain after he was originally dismissed by the Board was one of the central issues in the pre-tour dispute. He now faces one of the most critical matches of his controversial career following his team's poor form and his own failure with the bat with scores of 11, 7, 4 and 39.

A measure of his diminishing self-belief came in the second innings of the second Test, when he demoted himself to No.5, where he has indicated he will stay.

He passed over the chance of some match practice between Tests by missing the rain-affected game against South Africa A. Shivnarine Chanderpaul, who is likely to take his place at No.3, is not one to pass up such opportunities

and his chanceless 182 was a boost for the West Indies.

There has not been much else for them to enthuse over as they continue to rely heavily on their great but ageing fast bowlers, Courtney Walsh and Curtly Ambrose, and not much else.

It will take a massive change of mood and form for them to turn things around on a pitch, like those in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth, likely to aid the probing consistency of South Africa's fast bowlers and united and confident team.

South Africa (from): G Kirsten, M Gibbs, J Kallis, D Cullinan, H Cronje (captain), J Rhodes, S Pollock, M Boucher, P Symcox, A Donald, D Terbrugge, P Adams. West Indies (from): C Lambert, S Williams, P Wallace, B Lara (captain), S Chanderpaul, C Hooper, D Ganga, F Reifer, J Murray, R Jacobs, C Ambrose, C Walsh, M McLean, M Dillon, F Rose, R Lewis.



Brian Lara, on whose form the West Indies are reliant

Bath
blow as
Swift
departs

THE INDEPENDENT
Saturday 26 December 1998

Return to France 98: Brown remembers penalties that got away but accepts his squad simply was not good enough



Jackie McNamara (with ball) and Simon Donnelly with local children in St Rémy, near Scotland's World Cup training camp. Below: Coach Craig Brown in charge at St Rémy

Scots celebrate their 'horror movie'

BY PHIL SHAW

TOMMY DOCHERTY reckoned they would be home before the postcards. The bookies rated them at 400-1 to win the World Cup. Even the official title of "Don't Come Home Too Soon". At least no one could excuse Scotland of not living up to expectations at France 98.

But when he led his squad off the flight from Marseille to Glasgow the day after a horribly anticlimactic 3-0 defeat by Morocco had ended the dream for another four years, there were no rotten tomatoes or resignation demands awaiting Craig Brown.

To the Scotland manager's astonishment, the police had to hold back a crowd of 1,500 singing, swaying supporters in a sea of tartan. Heaven help the Strathclyde constabulary if the national team ever graduate beyond gallant failure in a major tournament.

Brown had sat up until 4.30am in his room at the Scots' base in St-Remy-de-Provence studying what he describes as the "horror movie" of the Moroccan match. Six months on, he is less inclined to see the French adventure as something to be

viewed from behind the metaphorical sofa.

Even Glenn Hoddle or his ghost-writer would struggle to present a record of no wins, one draw and two defeats as a moral triumph, but Brown uses the evidence of Fifa's statistical bureau to support his contention that the bare figures do not tell the true story.

"Going by their rankings, we were playing three of the top 11 sides on the planet, including the world champions, Brazil, who were always going to get through to the second phase. None of our clubs have had any success in Europe lately, and the World Cup, with the South Americans and Africans involved, is a far more rarefied atmosphere."

At the opening game in the Stade de France, Scotland conceded a soft headed goal inside three minutes following a Brazilian corner. Brown, who works hard on negating other team's set-pieces, was dumbfounded. "Everyone knew exactly what his job was," he reflects now. "The two players concerned, Gordon Durie and Craig Burley, were sleeping a hit."

However, John Collins equalised with a penalty, and Scotland actually had the better of the opening period

of the second half. Brazil's winner, an own goal off Tom Boyd's chest, was seen as an example of fate mocking the Scots once more, though Brown says with candour: "They wouldn't have been able to score a 'lucky' goal if they hadn't been in our six-yard box."

In the build-up to the next game, against Norway in Bordeaux, the media clamoured for Burley to be switched to the central midfield role he filled successfully in Celtic's championship charge. On a sweltering afternoon, the manager resisted until shortly after Scotland fell behind against the run of play early in the second half.

"Burley did a great job in stopping Roberto Carlos against Brazil and he also attacked well," Brown explains. "People said I should have started with him in the middle but unfortunately I haven't got two Craig Burleys."

Moving to his preferred position, Burley made his point with a fine equaliser. The Scottish fans celebrated long and loud, believing the point gave them a great chance to progress. Brown sensed it would not be so simple.

"We were unlucky only to draw. Norway hadn't lost in 18 and we ran



them into the ground but just couldn't get the winner. The feeling was that if we beat Morocco and Brazil beat Norway, we'd be through. But I knew that Brazil, having qualified, wouldn't be over-exerting themselves."

group game in St Etienne is of Jim Leighton fishing the ball from his net; or of Burley, hair newly bleached, disproving the notion that blonds have more fun by being sent off. Yet it was not a straightforward case of Morocco outclassing Scotland.

"That was a weird match," argues Brown. "If you show someone the match stats and ask them who they think won, they say Scotland. We had five corners to Morocco's one, 22 goal attempts to 14 by them, 14 on target to their nine, and a greater percentage of possession despite being down to 10 men for the last half hour."

The official, fly-on-the-wall video* shows a desolate dressing-room, with heads slumped on chests and Colin Hendry close to tears. Norway's defeat of Brazil meant that even a victory would not have been enough for Scotland to advance anyway but the inquest went on until sleep could be stalled no longer.

Brown had to consider whether his loyalty to the veteran Leighton had been misplaced; and to ask himself if he was right to omit Ally McCoist from a 22 not over-loaded with good finishers. In each case his answer is the same today as it was in Provence. "Leighton was outstanding for us in the qualifying and

his record of 45 clean sheets in 91 caps is exceptional. As for McCoist, I didn't think he was fit enough, or that he'd done enough in the last two months of the season."

Moreover, Brown still cannot quite believe Scotland's "bad luck" in France. "In every match we had a penalty turned down which the replays confirm we should have had. I've worked at three World Cup finals - with Alex Ferguson in Mexico in '86, Andy Roxburgh in Italy four years later and now this one - and we've not had a scrap of luck."

"But I don't want it to sound like sour grapes. The bottom line is that we weren't good enough. We're a small country and at the moment we don't have the resources. I said at the time that we needed to find a Hamish Zidane or a McRonaldo, but talent tends to come in cycles. I'm confident that we have some fine young players emerging like Barry Ferguson and Callum Davidson. We just need to find some strikers."

Brown returned to France to work as a radio summariser. Suffering Norway's negative tactics against Italy in Marseille he could not help thinking of what might have been. "The Italians were there to be beaten. It wasn't the best side

of theirs that I've seen."

By the time England were knocked out by Argentina, also in St Etienne, Brown was back in Bordeaux watching on television in a bar. He is "not convinced" they would have won if David Beckham had not been sent off unjustly in his opinion. "To watch the BBC Sports Review of the Year you'd have thought England would have won the tournament if only Beckham had stayed on. But I was impressed by them and keen to see them get into the last eight."

Such sentiments will not, it is safe to assume, be echoed by many of the supporters whose penchant for convivial chaos contrasted so vividly with the boorishness of some who were following England. Nevertheless, when Brown attended the first annual dinner of the Highland wing of the Tartan Army in Inverness recently, he was touched by the warm reception.

"There were 200 there and they were full of praise for our efforts in the World Cup. You get headlines saying 'Fans in rage at Brown' but I haven't met an angry one yet. They usually say: 'It was the best three weeks of my life.'"

*Craig Brown's World Cup Diary (Green Umbrella Video, £14.99).

Romantsev wants Russia job

OLEG ROMANTSEV, the coach of the Russian champions Spartak Moscow and widely seen as a leading candidate to head the national team after the sacking of Anatoly Byshovets, has said he wants the job.

"If such an offer was made, then, of course, I will take the job," Romantsev, 45, said yesterday. He added: "Under one condition - I will remain the Spartak coach." If chosen, Romantsev - who wants to look at a new generation of players and make his club a base for the national team - will be Russia's third coach in less than six months.

"I strongly believe that the Bosman ruling is a step backwards for European football," Romantsev added. "I would like to see a constitutional decree in Russia to outlaw players' movement abroad until

they reach the age of 24 or 25."

Romantsev has already had a two-year stint with the national squad, which ended with a disappointing display at Euro 96. Meanwhile, Byshovets, 52, has reportedly received an offer to coach the Iran Olympic squad. The Russian Football Union's executive board will name his successor on Monday.

There was good news for Romantsev yesterday with the announcement that his Spartak Moscow midfielder Yegor Titov, 22, had been chosen Russia's player of the year in a poll by the football weekly Football. This year, Russia have lost six straight matches, including all three of their European qualifiers, forcing Byshovets to step down last week.

Spanish football fans caused more than 30m pesetas (£132,000) worth of damage to the Montjuic Olympic stadium after Catalonia's 5-0 thrashing of Nigeria on Tuesday.

The pitch was left in a poor state by an invasion of around 2,000 celebrating supporters, more than 1,000 seats were broken, and some toilets were wrecked, stadium managers said on Thursday. The First Division club Espanyol use the ground and emergency repairs are underway before their next home game on 17 January.

All 26 clubs in China's first division falsified financial records this year to hide payments for thrown games and bribes to referees, according to the *Liberation Daily* in Shanghai.

"Many figures seem to be false," an official with the finance department of the

Chinese Football Association told the newspaper.

CFA rules require proof, in the form of receipts, for all expenditure by the clubs, but every club turned in false receipts to cover up their real figures, claimed the official.

The former Dutch international Jan Everse has been named as the new coach of Dutch First Division side Sparta Rotterdam, replacing Hans van der Zee.

Morocco's World Cup striker Mustapha Hadji, who came to the world's attention with some fine performances this summer in France, has been named African Footballer of the Year.

The poll, run by *African Football Magazine*, saw Leeds' South African captain Lucas Radebe finish seventh in the voting.

NBA may end season in January

THE NATIONAL Basketball Association in the United States is ready to cancel the season on 7 January if no agreement is reached with the players over the 17-day labour dispute.

The NBA deputy commissioner, Russ Granik, has declared the League would recommend to their Board of Governors it should vote to cancel the season on 7 January.

However, he also said he expects to meet again with the Players' Association before then. It is the first definitive "take it or leave it" date announced by the League. NBA commissioner David Stern had avoided mentioning a definitive date, claiming it would hamper negotiations and, without an agreement, the season would cancel itself. Some players have indicated they are ready to agree to the owners' latest offer.

Two Birmingham players get the bullet

THE TRAUMA continues at Birmingham Bullets where coach Mike Finger sacked two of his players on Christmas Eve, just a week after the Basketball League took control of the club from its former owner Harry Wrublewski. Bullets go into tomorrow's Budweiser League game against Leicester City Riders at the NEC without American Chuck Guitler and the former England International Mark Considine.

Finger said: "I want the team to win more than anything, but I'm not going to have anyone on my side who is not 100 per cent committed to the Bullets. There have been times this season when we looked as though we lacked heart on court. The majority of the players know how much this club means to its fans and feel just as committed themselves. I needed to make sure we are all of that mind. When you are in

a tight situation that can mean the difference between a win and a loss."

Last season Birmingham were league runners-up and went on to win the play-offs at Wembley, but this season they are only fifth after nine wins and seven defeats.

Uncertainty over the club's future ended last week when Mr Wrublewski announced his imminent return to Australia. The League will handle club affairs until a new owner is found for the franchise, one of the most financially stable, best supported and attractive in the league.

Finger said: "The new board have given me the go-ahead to look for replacements, and I want guys who can prove to me they have enough heart and commitment to call themselves a Birmingham Bullet."

Another player with an unwelcome Christmas surprise was Brad Wedel, who was ditched by Edinburgh Rocks to make way for American Michael New, who previously played for coach Jim Brandon at Manchester Giants.

TODAY'S NUMBER

864

The number of senior football games played by Stenhouse's 42-year-old central defender Graeme Armstrong, assuming he starts today's Scottish League Third Division game against East Stirlingshire. It will be a British record for an outfield player, eclipsing the mark set by the former Scottish International Tommy Hutchison.

SPORTING DIGEST	
AMERICAN FOOTBALL	
Randall Cunningham, the Minnesota Vikings quarterback, has won a multi-year contract extension. Terms of the deal were not disclosed. The Vikings also gave a multi-year extension to one of the men paid to protect Cunningham, offensive tackle Korey Stringer. The 35-year-old Cunningham, who was out of football before last season but is now a top candidate for Player of the Year honours, has led the Vikings to a league-best and franchise-best 14-1 record while becoming the NFL's top passer with a 107.3 rating.	
The Green Bay Packers right tackle Earl Dotson, a starter for the last four years, has signed a four-year contract extension worth nearly \$15m (£9m).	
The Green Bay Packers linebacker Jude Waddy, 23, has been suspended for four games, in accordance with league rule books, by the NFL for steroid use.	
FOOTBALL	
NATIONWIDE FOOTBALL LEAGUE: RE-ATTEMPTED DATES: The Jan 26: Bournemouth v Preston (ex Jan 21); Middlesbrough v Millwall (ex Jan 21); Feb 12: Rochdale v Hull City (ex Feb 13); Feb 19: Sheffield Utd v Bradford City (ex Feb 20); Feb 20: Birmingham v Bolton (ex Feb 20); Feb 26: Watford v Swindon (ex Feb 27); Feb 28: Crystal Palace v Barnley (ex Feb 27).	
BRAZILIAN CHAMPIONSHIP: Final third leg: Corinthians 2 (Edson 65, Marcelinho 83) Cruzeiro 0 (Corinthians win league).	
ICE HOCKEY	
Steve Carpenter and Rick Brebant have become the latest Sekonda Superleague players to be penalised by the St. Disiplinary Committee. The forward Brebant, who plays for leaders Manchester Storm, was given a three-match ban and a £250 fine after the committee felt that he failed to control his stick in a match at Bracknell on 12 December. The	
RUGBY LEAGUE	
The Welsh international forward Mark Perrett has signed for the First Division club Oldham after being released by the Super League side Halifax Blue Sox.	
SPEEDWAY	
Wolverhampton Wolves have signed the World Under-21 finalist Nicki	
Pedersen, of Denmark. Pedersen topped the Premier League averages on his debut season last year.	
SUMO	
The yokozuna (grand champion) Akebono will sit out next month's Grand Sumo tournament to recover from a hernia. Akebono returned on Thursday from Hawaii, where he was diagnosed with a hernia and was told it needs another six weeks to heal. The New Year Grand Sumo bout in Tokyo will be Akebono's second missed tournament in a row. He sat out the Kyushu Grand Sumo Tournament in November because of the same injury. Akebono, formerly Chad Rowan of Hawaii, is the first foreign wrestler to reach the rank of yokozuna, sumo's top position.	
TENNIS	
Japan's Takao Suzuki and South Korea's Sung-Hye Park were named as the Asian wildcards for next month's Australian Open at Melbourne.	

WEDNESDAY'S LOTTERY UPDATE			
Draw date: 25/12/98. The winning numbers: 4, 12, 15, 30, 38, 47. Bonus number: 20. Total Sales: £30,084,118. Prize Fund: £13,537,853 (45% of ticket sales).			
CATEGORY	NO. OF WINNERS	AMOUNT FOR EACH WINNER	TOTAL EACH TIER
Match 6 (jackpot)	4	£1,030,840	£4,123,360
Match 5 plus bonus ball	37	£74,630	£2,762,710
Match 5	752	£1,054	£792,608
Match 4	33,227	£52	£1,727,804
Match 3	560,831	£10	£5,608,310
TOTALS	594,831		£13,520,792

© Camelot Group plc. Players must be 16 or over. Breakage prizes rounded down to nearest £1. 117 061

Maybe, just maybe. THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

In the event of any discrepancy in the above, the data contained in Camelot's central computer system shall prevail

THE SWEEPER

BY CLIVE WHITE AND NICK HARRIS

Shayler: I'm no 'smog chomper'

MIDDLESBROUGH FAN David Shayler has admitted that it was only Boro's capacity for "snatching defeat from the jaws of victory" and "good old fashioned superstition" which prevented him from wearing a Boro shirt at his court hearing in France recently, when he successfully fought the British Government's plea for his extradition.

His plan was to tear off his outer shirt, Superman style to reveal a Boro away top ("I was playing away from home"), upon hearing the court's verdict, but changed his mind at the last moment.

Had it followed last week's unscheduled win by Bryan Robson's side at Old Trafford he might have thought differently.

Instead he wore the top when released from La Sante prison as a way of thanking those fans who had supported him throughout his ordeal. He was, though, somewhat irked by a letter he received while in prison from the Independent Manchester United Supporters Association, who had heard he was a "smog chomper".

"They even had the cheek to ask me if I was a Johnny-cum-lately, saying Boro fan because I haven't got a Teesside accent," he said. "Imagine that, being accused of being a glory-seeker by a Man Utd fan. I think that shocked me more than my arrest, imprisonment and subsequent release put together."

CLUTCHING A piece of paper in his hand, Neville Chamberlain promised anything but "peace for our time" for the poor opposition defenders of the Hanley and District League last week. The former Stoke winger-cum-striker, now player-joint manager of Birches Head Gardeners, was holding the freshly-signed registration form of his brother, Mark, whose pace once dazzled the great Brazilians themselves. As come-downs go, the Maracana stadium to a recreation pitch in the Potteries is a drop of heaven-to-earth proportions, but the Chamberlains - Neville is 38, Mark 37 - are just happy to be reunited for the first time since they were players together at the old Victoria Ground 15 years ago.

SHOULD PAOLO DI Canio's strained relationship with Sheffield Wednesday and English football in general lead, as expected, to a move abroad he could do worse than consider Brazil. Not only would his flair be appreciated in the home of the beautiful game but so, too, would his not-so-beautiful temperament, because in Brazil it's not just referees who get assaulted but also players - by referees.

In a recent tense championship quarter-final between Corinthians and Gremio, most of the rough stuff came from the referee, Marcio Rezende de Freitas. He shouted and argued with players and when two of them clashed he liter-

SONG SHEET

A touching festive message from Pompey fans to their Saints counterparts

"Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells, Scum can go to hell, Oh what fun it'll be to win. Next season at the Bell"

Tuner: Jingle Bells

ally collared the pair of them, yanking them towards him by the scruff of their shirts. And when a third player approached, he saw him off with a Di Canio-style shove in the chest. Come to think of it, a dose of his own medicine might do the errant Italian some good.

DESPITE WIDESPREAD objections towards the appointment of the untried David Platt as "coach" of Sampdoria, not everyone has been critical of his selection. The former England coach Don Howe is in no doubt that Platt possesses the right credentials to be a success. He also points out that his old playmate Bobby Robson has gone on record several times as saying that he wished he had managed abroad before managing in England. As for coming in at the top, David O'Leary said only last week that he thought there was nothing to be gained by starting at the bottom, and would, no doubt, endorse the former Highbury man's appointment. Particularly if Platt takes Lee Sharpe off his hands.

STEPPING UP from the dressing room to the manager's office has always been one of football's trickier career moves, but David O'Leary seems to have negotiated it less awkwardly than most since succeeding George Graham as Leeds manager last month. No longer "one of the lads", he is now afforded proper respect by players like Dutch striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, who has ceased to call him "Paddy". Instead he now calls him "Paddy Gaffer".

CHELSEA'S LAST Championship success may have been as long ago as 1954-55 but it would be a mistake to suggest that they therefore don't know what it takes to win one. No fewer than nine of the current first-team squad have won championships in other countries, and there is a tenth in the reserves. Who are they and what teams were they titlists with? The first all-correct answer to be sent or faxed (0171 293 2894) wins a bottle of something festive. Answer next week. Merry Christmas, one and all.

AS YOU WERE



COULD THIS possibly be the Best footballing Santa Claus ever (above) asking a young Michael Owen: "Are you sure you want a pair of football boots for Christmas, sonny? Wouldn't you rather have a six-pack of strong lager and a little black book full of beauty queens' names? I know a thing or two about football genius, and that's what you're after." By George, it most certainly isn't. Firstly, Liverpool's Wunderkind wasn't born until 1979, a good few years after the picture was taken. Secondly, no-one can imagine George Best (today, left) ever recommending just the one six-pack. And thirdly, the youngster on Santa's knee is actually Calum, his son.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

THE SWEEPER'S BOXING DAY BANKERS

LIBERO WAGERS

(15 x £1 four timers with William Hill): Coventry to draw with Tottenham (11-5); Everton to draw with Derby (9-4); Manchester United to beat Nottingham Forest (2-5); Newcastle to draw with Leeds (9-4); Sheffield Wednesday to draw with Leicester (9-4); Wimbledon to beat Charlton (8-11).

BOXING DAY SKY MATCH

Blackburn v Aston Villa

Aston Villa (£2 at 5-4, William Hill & Stanley).

ANTE-POST ACTION

Arsenal to win Premiership (£3 at 5-1, Coral & William Hill).

ORIGINAL BANK: £100.

CURRENT KITTY: £115.43!

TODAY'S BETS: £21.80 (including £1.80 tax paid on).

GOALPOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST

Five famous matches played on 25 December

CHRISTMAS DAY 1894

Bolton beat Liverpool 1-0, a defeat that helped send Liverpool down to the Second Division come 1895.

CHRISTMAS DAY 1912

Manchester United won 4-1 at Chelsea. United finished the season fourth, and the Blues 18th of 20.

CHRISTMAS DAY 1914

English and German soldiers stopped fighting the First World War to play football in no man's lands. It cannot be confirmed the Germans won on penalties, but recent history suggests they probably did.

CHRISTMAS DAY 1946

Barnsley drew 4-4 with Southampton at Barnsley. Some claim it was the last excitement either side has given their fans over a festive period. They drew again the next day, 1-1, in Southampton.

CHRISTMAS DAY 1959

Blackburn won 1-0 at home to Blackpool in 1959, the last year football was routinely played on Christmas Day at the highest level in England.

MY TEAM

FATHER CHRISTMAS
GSS NUUK

Chief Yuletide gift-giver, northern hemisphere "GSS Nuuk, my local team in Greenland, are hoping to play in the Greenland Champions' League next season, providing their squad are old enough. Most of the team are children - although they're still bigger than Liverpool's back three - but they still have a popular following. We rarely have any crowd trouble, although there was a nasty incident last season when some visiting Inuit fans had a bit of a run-in with a couple of my reindeer outside the ground in a dispute over who had the reddest hooter."

IN T'NET

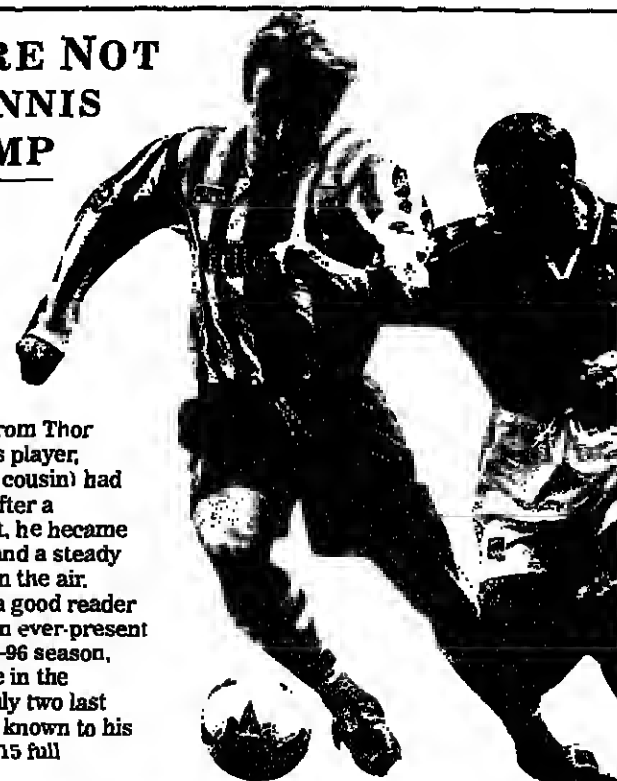
Found on the Web: Quotes from 1998 and before
"To play Holland, you have to play the Dutch."
- Ruud Gullit talks sexy football.
"England now have three fresh men, with three fresh legs." - Jimmy Hill talks maths.
"There's Bergkamp standing on the halfway line, with his hands on his hips, flailing his arms about."
- John Scales talks about the Netherlands' octopus.
"[Phil Neville] was treading on dangerous water there." - Ron Atkinson talks mixed metaphors.
"The Croats don't play well without the ball."
- Barry "The Hair" Venison talks tactics.
<http://www.geocities.com/SouthBeach/Palm/6687/pundits.html>

SEEN BUT NOT BOUGHT

NEWCASTLE UNITED'S Premier Collection Xmas Hamper (price £205.00, what a bargain) has all manner of NUFC booze, tea bags and other stuff in it. Not to mention some lumps of Wensleydale cheese. For the devoted Magpie, however, a better bet might be a pack of 24 NUFC Christmas cards, bearing such wildly amusing slogans as "Ha'way in a manger" and "Santa is a Geordie." Buy now for next year. Or not.

THEY'RE NOT ALL DENNIS BERGKAMP

Unsung foreign legionnaires No 19
LARS SIGURDSSON:
The 25-year-old Icelandic international central defender joined Stoke in 1994 from Thor after a former Potters player, Toddy Orlygsson (his cousin) had recommended him. After a somewhat shaky start, he became a first team regular and a steady performer. Powerful in the air, quick, and said to be a good reader of the game, he was an ever-present in the side in the 1995-96 season, missed only one game in the 1996-97 season and only two last season. 'Lari', as he's known to his team mates, has won 15 full international caps.



Elton John's uncle was all Dwight by me

IN THE secure, cosy carapace that is our modern existence we look to football to provide us with life on the edge. There is no football welfare state to protect the weak, the careless or the merely unfortunate. To the victor, all the spoils of conquest, to the defeated only despair, desperation and utter failure. Never were the highs or lows of the game felt more vividly than in just 23 minutes in the life of one player 40 seasons ago.

When Roy Dwight walked out onto the sun-drenched Wembley turf with his Nottingham Forest team mates to face Luton Town in the 1989 FA Cup final he must have believed that he had tasted already the extremes of human experience. Just four months previously the Reds had endured the most humiliating of defeats at the hands of Tooting

and Mitcham. Forced to play on a treacherous, frost-rutted surface on which no modern referee would tread, even to perform the most cursory of pitch inspections, Forest were 2-0 down and staring ignominy between the eyes. Ravenous journalists were turning over in their minds the headlines that would announce the cup upset of the decade. However, a face-saving draw was achieved and the replay duly won. Now 100,000 joyous voices welcomed the players onto the ultimate field of dreams.

Nine minutes into a game whose early stages Forest had dominated Stewart Inlach pulled back the ball and Roy Dwight volleyed a thunderous shot into the roof of the net. The Forest end of the ground erupted. A 13-year-old watching my first "away" game, I remained silent. The whole Wembley ex-

FAN'S EYE VIEW

ROY DWIGHT

BY STEPHEN SHAW

perience had been just too much to take in. My mind simply could not accept the fact that Forest were winning. The goal had to be disallowed. Why were all of these fools cheering? Could they not understand that there must have been a foul or an offside flag. Even the players were celebrating. Were they mad? Slowly, the truth dawned and I exploded like a delayed-action bomb. What Roy Dwight must have felt at that moment

is beyond comprehension. Five minutes later and Tommy Wilson added a second. Forest were coasting. Oh dear, someone went down injured. Who was it? It seemed to be Roy Dwight. Then he was getting up, thank God. Now who was injured this time? It was Roy Dwight again. They were bringing on the stretcher. Just 32 minutes gone and Dwight's game was over, his leg broken. What depths of despair he must have tumbled as he was taken to hospital, leaving his colleagues to scrap it out in defence of their lead for another hour. Later, as he watched them parading the cup around the stadium from his hospital bed he must have been able to put "mixed feelings" into a new realm.

My abiding memory of Roy Dwight, however, is not of that day of triumph at Wembley.

Early the following season I was waiting outside the changing room in the pursuit of autographs. The last one to emerge was known to be rather difficult. He pushed past us, met his wife and strode out of the ground. We followed at a discrete distance. As luck would have it he boarded the same corporation bus as us. Eventually a brave soul crept forward and asked for his autograph.

"No, son," the player snapped. Two points reflect the gulf that separates the modern game from that of yesteryear. Firstly, if being asked to sign an autograph after a game was an unwelcome intrusion into that player's privacy, then what would he have made of the sort of media attention the likes of Paul Gascoigne endure? Secondly, can we imagine a Premiership footballer going home by bus?

Half an hour before this incident occurred Roy Dwight had emerged from the changing room, still using his post-Wembley crutch. Immediately he was mobbed by young fans. Spotting his plight, a policeman moved in. He sensed that he was not needed.

"Alright, Roy?" he asked. "Fine," our hero replied as he set about our autograph books. What a player, and what a great bloke. Today's footballer is as big a celebrity as the greatest pop star. Four decades ago that was not the case. Even Roy Dwight's greatest admirer would agree that he was not as big a name worldwide as his nephew although young Reg Dwight had to change his name before he found fame in the world of popular music. In Nottingham, however, older folk will still ask: "Elton John! Isn't he Roy Dwight's nephew?"

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

I am a very well paid entertainer but when I see figures banded around like £18m for Alan Shearer it makes me laugh. It is absolutely ridiculous and money for old rope. Then you see the players' attitudes - they are paid so much money and they're just strutting around the pitch.
Elton John, Watford chairman.

When you're inside an ambulance with a nurse, an anaesthetist and a specialist with his bag of tricks you don't worry about your team's position in the Football League. Graham Taylor, Watford manager, on his emergency trip to hospital with a throat abscess.

He is mad about bananas. He has them in everything, even in his soup. If he reached into his pocket for a pen, he would probably pull out a banana. Middlesbrough captain Andy Townsend on the dietary requirements of his team-mate, Hamilton Ricard.

I just wanted to be able to talk smack, be on the corner drink some beer, whip somebody's butt now and then. Mike Tyson on his childhood dreams.

I don't give a monkeys how we did it. John Gregory, Aston Villa manager, after the 1-0 win over Charlton.

Curbishley aims to raise the spirits

Charlton Athletic's shoestring squad are hoping they can emerge from a bad spell of form. Glenn Moore talked to their manager

A TELEUTUBBY? A home computer? A Manchester United away kit? No, none of the usual Christmas stand-bys would do for Alan Curbishley this Yuletide. A new player or two would certainly come in handy but, more than anything, the Charlton manager says he wants "a result".

After eight matches without a win, and five defeats on the spin, goodwill appears to be the only thing going Charlton's way and they badly need at least a point at Wimbledon this lunchtime. The same applies to the home game against resurgent Arsenal on Monday.

Their current position, two points off the relegation zone and very much among the stragglers, seems a long way away from the heady days of autumn when, as newly-promoted tyros, they put five past Southampton and gained draws at Highbury and Anfield. Curbishley's manager of the month award for August is gathering dust and, he admitted when we met at the club's spruce south-east London training ground, "it is hard to relax at the moment".

Llewellyn Charles Curbishley is the Premiership's third longest-serving manager having taken charge at Charlton, initially in tandem with Steve Gritt, in 1991. The present run is the worst in that period.

"When you go into the Premiership as a newly promoted side a bad run is on the cards somewhere," he said. "This, I hope, is ours and the sooner we get out of it the better."

On the positive side, though, this only makes the defeats more frustrating. Charlton are not "getting annihilated, we're not far away from what we did in the early part of the season. But we didn't give away such howlers then."

Sloppy mistakes and lapses at set-pieces are at the heart of Charlton's drift down the table. As so often for newly-promoted sides they can match others from box-to-box, the difference is in the two areas.

Monday's home defeat to Aston Villa was a typical example. At half-time Charlton had had seven goal attempts, none were on target. Villa had had four, three of which required saving. The match also reflected another truism for struggling sides - bad luck. The game opened with a bizarre Villa goal deflected in off Richard Rufus. It ended with Charlton hitting the bar twice.

The late rally suggested team spirit was as good as Curbishley claimed following two "clear-the-air" team meetings the previous week. It needs to be as Charlton are neither willing, nor able, to buy themselves out of trouble. After the financial crises of the eighties, and the years in exile at Selhurst Park and Upton Park, this is a club which takes the long-term view.

"We've been there," said Curbishley, "with no ground and everything else, and we'll not live beyond our means. I've been there when directors have written their own cheques out to keep things going. We've all worked so hard to get where we are we aren't going to jeopardise our future though a lot of clubs have."

"Only five years ago we couldn't pay our way and were selling players to pay the wages, we never want to get back in that position. The last thing I want if we are unsuccessful is for them to come to me and say 'I've got to sell half the side. I don't think that is a lack of ambition, I think that is being sensible, perhaps not too many clubs now are being sensible.'"

The upshot of this is that Charlton (spending since promotion: £2.5m) are competing with the likes of Villa (£21m in that time). But Wimbledon have done it. "What they have done is incredible and I think people take what Joe Kinnear does for granted now," said Curbishley. "It's something we'll always look up to. But I do think it was easier to establish yourself then - and we came up with

them [in 1988] - than it is now. The financial gap is so big between the divisions."

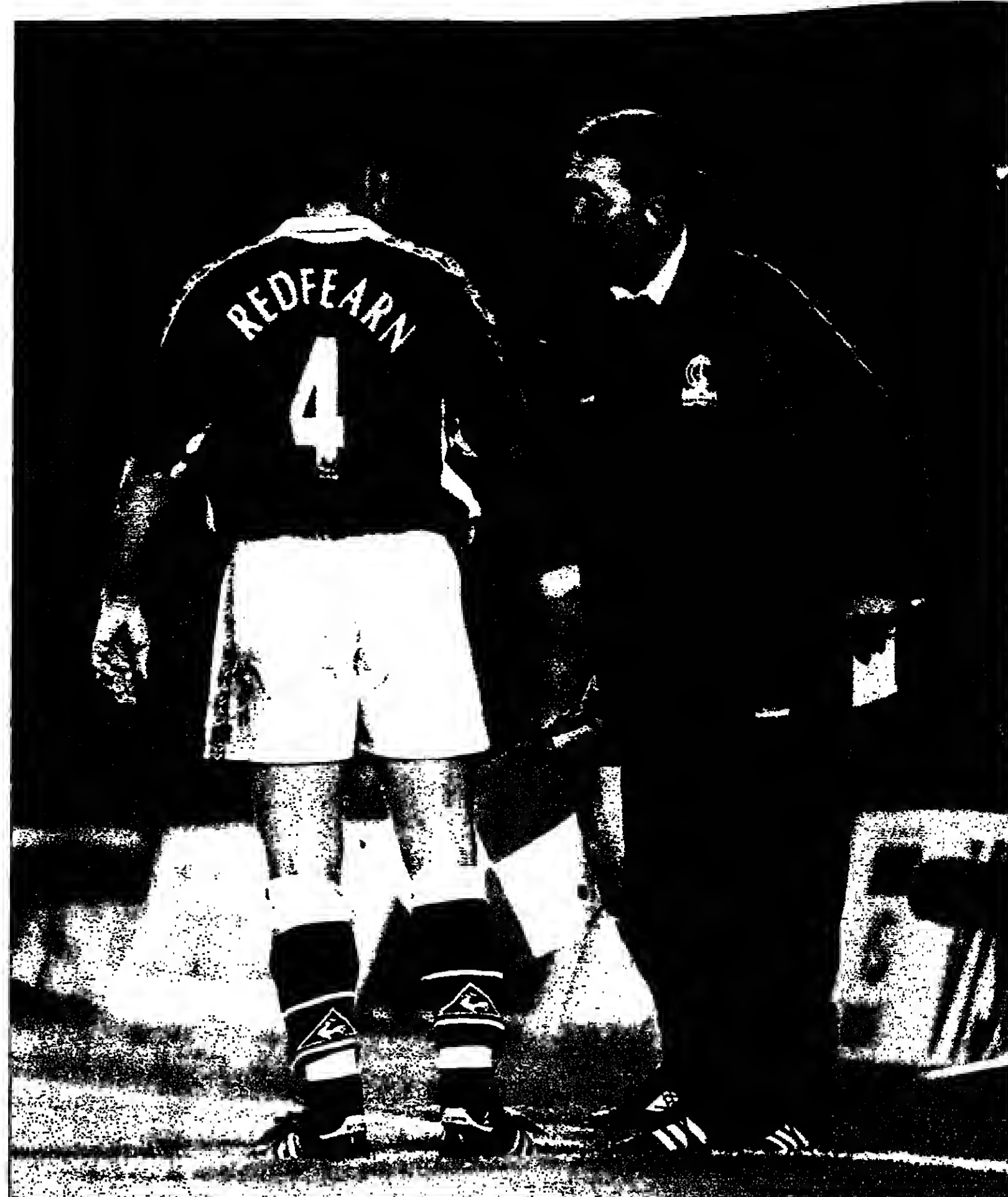
Neil Redfearn appears after his post-training shower to confirm this analysis. Last year he was at the heart of Barnsley's unsuccessful attempt to survive their first season in the Premiership. Now he hopes for better fortune at Charlton having become their first - and only - £1m player in the summer.

"In this division it is vital you get the first goal," he said, "sides don't give you a chance, they are ruthless. If anything the standard is higher than last year but we've not been getting drilled. We're frustrated rather than despondent, we've let ourselves down at important times."

Redfearn's own form has been patchy. He and Curbishley agree the change to a more defensive system, brought about by injuries to Shaun Newton and John Robinson and a desire to stem the goals-against, have affected his opportunities to get forward in the way he did for Barnsley. With the wide players returning Charlton were back to 4-4-2 on Monday and Redfearn responded with several shot.

Having been on the wrong end of six-and-seven-goal defeats with Barnsley, Redfearn admitted: "Away from home you are better off playing it tight but at home you've got to open up and try to break teams down. You are bound to lose some games, there are good teams in this division, but at Barnsley after Christmas we decided we might as well try to stay up getting at people and giving them something to worry about, especially at home. For a while we beat everyone and teams did not want to come to Oakwell."

A return to form by Redfearn would be a valuable asset to Curbishley, who also has to contend with the dips in performance by promotion heroes Sasa Ilic and Clive Mendonca. Mendonca, another casualty of the defensive emphasis, has been rested but Ilic, despite



Alan Curbishley (right) and his captain Neil Redfearn discuss tactics during Monday's defeat by Aston Villa

David Ashdown

some recent errors, remains in the side. The goalkeeper was in Israel playing for Yugoslavia on Wednesday but, if fit, will play today with Curbishley pledging: "I feel he deserves a little more loyalty after all he's done and I've not thought about dropping him. But I have said if he is unable to pick his head up we will have to move on."

In the wings wait the produce of one of the country's best youth systems. Charlton top the reserve league but it is a big step up to the Premiership. As the teenagers clattered past after finishing training, Curbishley said: "One or two have been stiffed this year because we came up. Paul Konchesky became our youngest ever player last year (at 16) but we brought Chris Powell in. They realise... if they're good enough they'll get in."

Curbishley's own youngsters were resigned, like all football folk, to the usual truncated Christmas. "A lot of their friends have gone on holiday. I've told them the only time we will be able to do that is if I get the sack. Maybe they're sitting there at home with fingers crossed."

That is the black humour of the struggling manager. But there is still optimism at The Valley. It is not so long ago a

player, John Burnstead, had to run from the Canning Flyover to Upton Park to hand in the team sheet for a match as the team coach was stuck in traffic and the club could not afford the fine. Incidents like that have taught Curbishley, 41, a sense of perspective, as did a spell as a roadie in the United States with his brother Bill, a manager of rock acts like the Who and Led Zeppelin. "You see how

hard they work," said Curbishley. "It's not all a bed of roses, no-one gives you anything." That is much like the Premiership. It is important for the game that newly-promoted, well-run clubs like Charlton, with a feel for their community, youth and the future, prosper. Their fans will not be the only ones hoping the Robins have a merry Christmas, followed by a happy New Year.

Klos completes Ibrox move Todd hopes to step up promotion challenge

DAVID MURRAY, the Rangers chairman, hopes his club's goalkeeper, Stefan Klos, will be worth the wait.

Murray has revealed that the Ibrox club have waited since the summer to finalise the signing of the German custodian - a deal which was completed on Christmas Eve.

Klos may make his Premier League debut against St Johnstone today after sealing his £700,000 move from Borussia Dortmund. Murray said: "It is the longest transfer I've been involved in during my 10 years

SCOTTISH FOOTBALL

BY JAMIE MCCANDLISH

at the club. I shook Stefan's hand last summer and we agreed a deal. It has been as simple as that. He has shown he is a man of his word and has shown his commitment to Rangers by making a contribution to the transfer fee. He is only 27 yet has a wealth of experience and we are delighted to welcome him to Ibrox."

Rangers' Dutch coach, Dick

Advocaat, could drop the current No 1 Antti Niemi to make way for Klos, although Niemi was outstanding in the 3-2 win against Hearts last weekend.

Advocaat said: "We need two or three top keepers at this club. That is very important. But you will have to wait and see if Stefan plays. It is a difficult decision for me to make. However it is a squad game, not just about the 11 players on the field and I want people to be happy. If they are not then, they know what they can do." Rangers' other senior keeper is the

injured Frenchman, Lionel Charbonnier.

Celtic, who travel to Dundee tomorrow, will be without Craig Burley. The midfielder was aiming to return after two months out because of a groin problem, only to suffer a breakdown in training. The match may also come too soon for both Jackie McNamara (knee) and Marc Rieper (ankle).

St Mirren have appointed Tom Hendrie as their new manager, after they agreed a compensation deal with Alloa. Hendrie, who brings his as-

sistant John Coughlin with him from the Second Division club, has signed a two-and-a-half year deal with the Paisley side.

St Mirren turned their attention to Hendrie after admitting they were not in a financial position to make the former Hull City player-manager Mark Hateley an offer.

Hendrie will take charge of the First Division club for the first time today against Hamilton. He takes over at Love Street following the departure of the previous manager, Tony Fitzpatrick, earlier this month.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE

BY IAN RODGERS

his financially struggling Portsmouth side face at second-placed Ipswich, and he admits that financial worries have affected their recent performances.

"It has been very hard for the players to concentrate on playing when there are so many things going on off the pitch," Ball said. "Ipswich are without a very good side in this division but we have to approach the game with the right attitude and commitment."

Graham Taylor ends an emotional week watching his Watford side entertain Bristol City. Taylor only returned to the club on Tuesday after admitting that he nearly died from a serious throat infection five weeks previously. "I will remain working part-time until I get the all-clear," Taylor said.

Bruce Rioch is still a contented man as Norwich City remain comfortably placed in the play-off positions, ahead of the Carrow Road manager's return to Queen's Park Rangers. "If you'd asked me back in August I'd have settled for fifth place in the table and 40 points on the board," said Rioch, who was assistant to Stewart Houston at Loftus Road. "The trick now is to keep it going."

Peter Reid, the Huddersfield manager, is desperate for a little more consistency from his side for the game against Grimsby at the McAlpine Stadium to regain the momentum of their promotion challenge. "We are playing well one match then losing the next," Jackson said. "We need to put

Football 'pricing kids out'

CHEAPER PREMIERSHIP foot-

ball tickets for children are at the top of the Football Task Force's agenda this Christmas.

The Task Force found that 63 per cent of schoolchildren who responded to a survey about the game felt top-flight clubs sometimes price them out of attending matches.

A Task Force spokeswoman, Alison Pilling - who is also the new chairman of the Football Supporters' Association - believes children up and down the country will be unfairly denied a Christmas trip to see their favourite team over the next few days. "Our survey provides startling new evidence of the extent to which children are being shut out of our football grounds," she said. "The game must act now if it is to save the fans of the future."

The Task Force plans to encourage a nationwide pricing structure based on what is currently the "best practice" among clubs.

Alan Ball is under no illusions about the size of the task

some sort of run together but, having said that, we are only three points off third place."

Barnsley travel to Stockport hoping to forget about last week's 3-1 defeat at home to Swindon, which left their player-manager, John Hendrie, in no doubt who was to blame. "I'm very disappointed with the defence. They have to take some responsibility at times," Hendrie said.

Elsewhere Swindon Town aim to capitalise on that 3-1 win over Barnsley when Wolves visit the County Ground. West Bromwich Albion will try to shake off the disappointment of last week's 2-0 home defeat by Tranmere with a victory over Port Vale.

Oxford United will try to put a run of three defeats behind them when Crystal Palace visit the Manor Ground. (P)ig Moore should return for Palace after a hamstring injury. However, Attilio Lombardo's comeback is likely to be delayed.

The Football League, meanwhile, has suggested that clubs rearrange their fixtures on 27 March to avoid clashing with England's European Championship qualifying match against Poland. The League fears that attendances will be hit if games kick off at 3pm - the same time as England's televised match at Wembley.

The Football Association and the police turned down requests from the League to move the kick-off of England's game to either 1pm or 6pm. The League has therefore written to all its clubs warning them about the fixture clash. It is now up to the clubs to rearrange their games for the Friday evening, Sunday afternoon, or at a different time on the Saturday.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP																			
		Home					Away					5-game form					Upcoming matches		
	Pt	Pts	GD	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	
1	Aston Villa	18	36	+11	6	2	1	17	11	4	4	1	10	6	DDLWW				Tuesday Blackburn (H); Monday Sheffield Wed (H); 9 Jan Middlesbrough (A); 18 Jan Everton (H)
2	Chelsea	18	33	+12	6	3	0	15	5	2	6	1	14	12	DWDDW				Tuesday Southampton (H); Monday Man Utd (H); 9 Jan Newcastle (A); 16 Jan Coventry (H)
3	Man Utd	18	31	+13	6	3	1	24	12	2	4	2	12	11	WDDDL				Tuesday Middlesbrough (H); Monday Chelsea (A); 16 Jan West Ham (H); 16 Jan Leicester (A)
4	Middlesbrough	18	30	+9	4	5	0	15	7	3	4	2	15	14	WDDWW				Tuesday Liverpool (H); Monday Derby (A); 9 Jan Aston Villa (H); 16 Jan Leeds (A)
5	Leeds	18	29	+12	6	2	1	16	3	1	6	2	13	14	WLWWL				Tuesday Newcastle (A); Monday Warrington (H); 9 Jan Blackburn (A); 16 Jan Middlesbrough (H)
6	Arsenal	18	29	+9	5	4	0	14	4	2	4	3	6	7	LDDWL				Tuesday West Ham (H); Monday Charlton (A); 9 Jan Liverpool (H); 16 Jan Chelsea (H)
7	West Ham	18	29	0	5	3	1	14	10	3	2	4	8	12	WWLLW				Tuesday Arsenal (A); Monday Coventry (H); 16 Jan Aston Villa (H); 16 Jan Leeds (A)
8	Wimbledon	18	26	-6	5	3	1	14	9	2	2	5	9	20	LWLWW				Tuesday Charlton (H); Monday Leeds (A); 9 Jan Derby (H); 16 Jan Tottenham (H)
9	Liverpool	18	25	+7	4	3	2	17	10	3	1	5	12	12	WWLLW				Tuesday Middlesbrough (A); Monday Newcastle (H); 9 Jan Arsenal (A); 16 Jan Southampton (H)
10	Newcastle	18	24	+1	5	2	2	14	10	1	4	4	8	11	LWDDW				Tuesday Leeds (H); Monday Liverpool (A); 9 Jan Chelsea (H); 17 Jan Charlton (H)
11	Leicester	18	24	+1	5	2	2	14	9	1	4	4	7	11	LDWWL				Tuesday Sheffield Wed (H); Monday Blackburn (H); 9 Jan Everton (H); 16 Jan Man Utd (H)
12	Derby	18	24	+1	2	5	2	8	8	3	4	2	10	9	LWDDD				Tuesday Everton (A); Monday Middlesbrough (H); 9 Jan Coventry (H); 16 Jan Blackburn (H)
13	Tottenham	18	23	-5	4	3	2	15	15	2	2	5	8	13	WLWDL				Tuesday Coventry (H); Monday Aston Villa (H); 9 Jan Sheffield Wed (A); 16 Jan Wimbledon (H)
14	Sheff Wed	18	22	+1	5	2	2	13	5	1	2	6	7	14	DLWWL				Tuesday Tottenham (H); Monday West Ham (A); 9 Jan Norwich (H); 16 Jan West Ham (A)
15	Everton	18	22	-5	2	5	2	3	5	3	2	4	9	12	WWDWL				Tuesday Derby (H); Monday Tottenham (H); 9 Jan Leicester (H); 16 Jan Aston Villa (A)
16	Charlton	18	16	-6	2	3	3	13	9	1	4	5	9	19	LLLLL				Tuesday Wimbledon (A); Monday Arsenal (H); 9 Jan Southampton (A); 16 Jan Newcastle (H)
17	Coventry	18	16	-11	3	3	3	10	11	1	1	7	5	15	LDLLD				Tuesday Tottenham (H); Monday Everton (H); 9 Jan Norwich (H); 16 Jan Chelsea (A)
18	Blackburn	18	14	-9	3	2	4	10	10	0	3	6	7	16	LLWDD				Tuesday Aston Villa (H); Monday Leicester (H); 9 Jan Coventry (H); 16 Jan Derby (A)
19	Southampton	18	13	-20	2	2	5	12	18	1	2	6	3	17	WLLWL				Tuesday Chelsea (H); Monday Norwich (A); 9 Jan Coventry (H); 16 Jan Liverpool (A)
20	Nottm Forest	18	12	-15	1	5	3	8	11	1	1	7	9	21	LDLLD				Tuesday Man Utd (A); Monday Southampton (H); 9 Jan Coventry (A); 16 Jan Arsenal (H)

Boxing Day guide to the Premiership

MATCH OF THE DAY

Middlesbrough v Liverpool

Last season: No fixture



BRYAN ROBSON should really be full of festive cheer as he welcomes Liverpool to fortress Riverside this afternoon. But although his Middlesbrough side - unbeaten in their last 11 league games, unbeaten at home for twice as many, and placed fourth in the table after last week's surprise 3-2 win at Old Trafford - seem to be sitting pretty, all Robson can talk about is avoiding relegation. Then again, he knows all too much about the subject and his cautious approach is possibly making his players more determined to prove wrong those who'd written them off.

"We need another 12 points and then we've got the 42 that we set out to get at the start of the season," Robson said this week. "We're still building at the club and we've still

BY NICK HARRIS

got a long way to go to get up there with the likes of the Arsenal and Man Utd, but we feel that we're going the right way.

"If somebody had said to me that we were going to be a point behind Man Utd and above Arsenal at this stage of the season, I would have snapped their hands off at the start of the season."

The win at Old Trafford was achieved without the presence of Paul Gascoigne (left), who was serving a one-match ban but he should return today. "That's a good boost for us, the way Gazza's been playing of late," Robson said. Gary Pallister is rated as having a better than 50-50 chance of recovering from a

heel injury, but Robbie Mustoe is almost certain to miss out both today and on Monday at Derby because of a hamstring problem.

Steve McManaman has played himself back into contention for Liverpool but manager Gerard Houllier will not say whether he will start today. The side have lost six of the nine games that McManaman has missed, and Houllier knows he can't do without the winger's talents. As the French manager will also not be able to call on his compatriot, recent midfield signing Jean-Michel Ferri (ankle), Macca's chances may have improved.

"The best present we could give our fans is to win the two games over Christmas," Houllier said. "If we do that we have a chance to come back and play in the top third of the

table, which is very important. The team is better playing with more confidence. At the moment I'm happy the team is working well and becoming more confident in its defensive abilities.

One player not lacking confidence should be Michael Owen (right) and if nothing else, today's match will offer him - and Paul Gascoigne - another chance to demonstrate why (or why not) they have glittering England careers ahead of them.

MIDDLESBROUGH (from): Schwarzer, Festa, Cooper, Vickers, Pugh, Gordon, Mawson, Maddison, Gascoigne, Townsend, Doane, Ricard, Beck.
LIVERPOOL (from): James, Heggan, Carragher, Staunton, Robb, Berronette, Berger, Ince, Redknapp, McManaman, Owen, Fowler, Riedel, Matteo, Freddie Thompson, Kwame, McAtee, Leonhardson.
Suspensions: None.
Referee: G. Poll.



Arsenal v West Ham (12 noon)

Last season: 4-0

ARSENAL ARE close to having a fully fit squad as they prepare to welcome the former Gunners Ian Wright and John Hartson back to Highbury for today's visit by the Hammers. Manager Arsene Wenger's injury problems have eased over recent weeks, and now Nigel Winterburn (hamstring) and Ray Parlour (ankle) could be ready to rejoin the squad after missing last Sunday's 3-1 win against Leeds. Captain Tony Adams is the only remaining long-term injury but even he is expected to be back in training soon and may make a return to the team early in the new year.

West Ham manager Harry Redknapp is likely to stick with Wright and Hartson - even though they have managed only one goal between them in the last seven games - today. Redknapp does not want to risk Paul Kitson, who has had a broken toe, though he could be pushed into the fray on Monday against Coventry if he has an injection. John Moncur returns after a one-match ban but Neil Ruddock is still suspended.

ARSENAL (from): Seaman, Manninger, Lucic, Doon, Winterburn, Vivas, Keown, Boulik, Mendes, Upson, Griffiths, Ljungberg, Pett, Vieira, Overmars, Boa Morre, Parlor, Bergkamp, Anelka, Wreh.
WEST HAM (from): Hyslop, Bracken, Dicks, Potts, Kellier, Sinclair, Hartson, Lomas, Wright, Ferdinand, Moncur, Lazaridis, Lampard, Pearce, Forrest, Omoiyin, Coyne, Bericovic, Margas.
Suspensions: West Ham: Ruddock.
Referee: P. Jones.

Coventry v Tottenham

Last season: 4-0

COVENTRY MANAGER Gordon Strachan will field the side that drew with Derby last week as he looks to drag his struggling Sky Blues a few points clearer of the four sides below them. Noel Whelan and Darren Huckerby will be the strike partnership this afternoon, leaving new signing John Aloisi from Portsmouth on the bench. Strachan has revealed Darren Jackson's lack of confidence has kept the striker on the bench thus far at Highfield Road. "I know that our supporters must have been perplexed to see him on the substitutes' bench but I had no alternative," Strachan said. "It is a slow business building up self-esteem, but he tells me he is getting better every day. He enjoys it down here and he says we have a great bunch of players."

George Graham is likely to name an unchanged Spurs team for the trip to the Midlands. The injured trio of John Scales, Ramon Vega and Steffen Iversen are all making progress but are not yet able to return. Tottenham have won three of their last four league visits to Highfield Road although the other game, last season's visit, ended in a 4-0 defeat for the London side.

COVENTRY (from): Hyatt, Cleland, Bile, Marenzeller, Unsworth, Dacourt, Hutchinson, Grant, Cadamarteri, Ward, Barry, Collins, Branch, Madsen, Short, Simonsen, Watson, Oller, Bakayoko, Dunne, Ball.
TOTTENHAM (from): Walker, Carr, Calderwood, Nielsen, Fox, Anderson, Ferdinand, Armstrong, Edinburgh, Gmoli, Wilson, Dominguez, Allen, Sinton, Abbott, Clemence, Young, Baardson.
Suspensions: None.
Referee: K. Ruge.

Everton v Derby

Last season: 1-2

WALTER SMITH has nearly a full Everton squad to pick from today. Back from suspension come Richard Dunne and Michael Ball, while Craig Short, Dave Watson, John Collins, John O'Shea, Ibrahim Bakayoko and Nicky Barnby are all clear of injury or illness. It means Smith will not have to patch up his squad with youth team players like Adam Farley, who sat on the bench for last week's 3-1 defeat by West Ham. It could also mean that Michael Madar will once again be consigned to the bench.

Derby's Croatian captain Igor Stimac could be back in contention for his club's Christmas matches. The Croatian has not played since the end of October and returned home to Split last week for treatment on an ankle injury. Manager Jim Smith will have to make a change for today's game because both left-backs Tony Dorigo and Stefan Schnoor are injured. Robert Kozluk could play, having recovered from an ankle knock, and may operate at right wing-back, with the versatile Rory Delap moving to the left. Midfielder Lars Bohinen is suspended. Stefano Eraso has recovered from flu but now has a calf injury.

EVERTON (from): Hyatt, Cleland, Bile, Marenzeller, Unsworth, Dacourt, Hutchinson, Grant, Cadamarteri, Ward, Barry, Collins, Branch, Madsen, Short, Simonsen, Watson, Oller, Bakayoko, Dunne, Ball.
DERBY COUNTY (from): Poon, Pifer, Carbonari, Larsen, Elliott, Kozluk, Powell, Carley, Eraso, Delap, Sturridge, Wanchope, Harper, Houli, Stimac, Christie, Hunt, Bridge-Wilkinson.
Suspensions: Derby: Bohinen.
Referee: M. Ruge.

Man Utd v Nottm Forest

Last season: No fixture

JAAP STAM and Dwight Yorke are both doubtful, despite good progress in training this week. It was thought they would be back to face the Premiership's bottom club, but manager Alex Ferguson said on Christmas Eve they are still struggling. Both Ferguson said on Christmas Eve they are still struggling. Both Ferguson said on Christmas Eve they are still struggling.

Nottingham Forest have sent Jesper Mattsson home to Sweden for five weeks due to a badly bruised spleen, suffered in last Saturday's 2-2 draw with Blackburn. Alan Rogers is expected to be fit after being kept out of that game by a back injury. Nigel Bassey returns to the squad after a bout of flu but Dave Bassett's side will be without banned Pierre van Hooijdonk. Forest are looking for their first win in 16 League games - a defeat or draw would equal the club and Premier League record.

NOTTINGHAM FOREST (from): Beasant, Hjelde, Bonaluk, Christie, Mattsson, Armstrong, Rogers, Stone, Johnson, Quarless, Gemmell, Bart-Williams, Freedman, Ship-ping, Harwood, Darchaville, Gray, Crossley.
Suspensions: United: G. Neville. Forest: Van Hooijdonk.
Referee: J. Winter.

...And statistics A footballing Christmas carol

MANAGERS ARE keen to set out their defensive stails. They may even make the collection of clean sheets their No 1 priority. There are those that become Scrooge-like, bringing back everyone behind the ball, man-to-man marking, manfully denying space. And when presented with the old adage of attack being the best form of defence, mutter "humbbug!" and tighten their lines. Perhaps they should heed The Ghost of Football past.

Only once in six Premiership seasons has the side with the meanest defence won the championship, Manchester United in the inaugural season of 1992-93.

1992-93	Man Utd	31	Man Utd	31
1993-94	Arsenal	28	Man Utd	38
1994-95	Man Utd	28	Blackburn	39
1995-96	Arsenal	32	Man Utd	34
1996-97	Arsenal	32	Man Utd	44
1997-98	Man Utd	26	Arsenal	33

On three occasions the champions have let in at least a third more goals than the Premiership Scrooges. On three occasions it has been Arsenal playing the part of Scrooge. Last season, they reversed the roles with Manchester United, let in seven more goals - and edged the championship.

Over the longer term, however, defensive attributes count for much. Thirteen clubs have played all the six completed Premiership seasons. Here are their total clean sheets out of their 240 games.

Total Premiership clean sheets 1992-1998

Man Utd	112
Arsenal	101
Blackburn	88
Leeds	87
Aston Villa	81
Liverpool	79
Everton	72
Chelsea	70
Coventry	70
Wimbledon	67
Tottenham	62
Sheff Wed	59
Southampton	54

More immediately, any Premiership club tempted to become too Scrooge-like must heed...The Ghost of Football Present. With almost half the current season gone, the most miserly defence is not ruling the Premiership.

Team	Home	Away	Total	Current position
Arsenal	4	7	11	6
Chelsea	5	11	16	2
Aston Villa	11	6	17	1
Derby	8	9	17	12
Everton	7	10	17	15
Leeds	3	14	17	5
Sheff. Wed	5	14	19	14
Leicester	9	11	20	11
Middlesbrough	7	14	21	4
Newcastle	10	11	21	10
Liverpool	10	12	22	9
Man Utd	11	11	22	3
West Ham	10	12	22	7
Blackburn	10	16	26	18
Coventry	11	15	26	17
Charlton	9	19	28	16
Tottenham	15	13	28	13
Wimbledon	9	20	29	8
Nottm Forest	11	21	32	20
Southampton	18	17	35	19

Statistics: Brian Sears/Nick Harris



Arsene Wenger, whose Arsenal side proved last year that being tight does not pay. In the year they won the Double, Manchester United stole their 'meanest defence' title.

Everton - who have let in 17 goals in their 18 games - are as low as 15th in the Premiership while Wimbledon - with 29 goals conceded - are as high as eighth. Manchester United have let in as many as 22 goals but still are managing third.

Arsenal would seem to have reverted to type with their splendid defensive record being too Scrooge-like to allow goals going in at the other end. Fans at Highbury have only had to endure four opposition goals all season and at Elland Road it has been only three. In contrast at White Hart Lane and The Dell, Tottenham and Southampton have let in more goals at home than they have on their travels. That's true, too, of Villa to the extent of almost two goals at home for every one away - they have let in their last four home games. Not even clean sheets are proving a sure guarantee of success. Too often for some clubs clean sheets are leading to no-score draws.

Keeping clean sheets 1998-99 (number of 0-0s in brackets)

9 clean sheets	5 clean sheets
Everton (6)	Charlton (3)
Arsenal (5)	Liverpool (2)
	Man Utd (2)
8 clean sheets	4 clean sheets
Leeds (4)	Tottenham (1)
West Ham (4)	Wimbledon (1)
Aston Villa (3)	
6 clean sheets	3 clean sheets
Blackburn (3)	Coventry (1)
Chelsea (3)	
Derby (3)	2 clean sheets
Newcastle (3)	Nottm Forest (1)
Sheff Wed (2)	Southampton (1)
Middlesbrough (1)	

And what of the Ghost of Football Future?

Statistics can help us no further. In the story, Ebenezer Scrooge was transformed, and if anyone knew how to celebrate Christmas it was he. May that be said of all in football - from the most miserly defender to the most prolific goalscorer.

Newcastle v Leeds

Last season: 1-1



NEWCASTLE STRIKERS Alan Shearer and Duncan Ferguson stand a good chance of being fit enough to link up for the first time today. Shearer has suffered no negative reaction to his 35 minutes of action as a substitute during the 1-0 victory over Leicester last Saturday, while Ferguson (heavy flu) is back in training and expected to be in contention for this afternoon.

Leeds manager David O'Leary heads to Newcastle with injury problems that are threatening to undermine the club's season. Centre-back Robert Molenaar has been ruled out until May or later with cruciate ligament damage, less than a month after fellow defender Martin Hiden suffered the same injury. Leeds' influential captain Lucas Radebe is also out with a twisted knee. There may be a return to St James' Park for midfielder David Batty just two weeks after his £4.4m move to Elland Road. He sustained a cracked rib during his second debut for Leeds but trained on Thursday and said: "I never want to miss any match, and this one is a bit special. In the end it will be down to me to decide whether I'm fit enough to play."

NEWCASTLE UNITED (from): Given, Harper, Barton, Chaner, Howey, Dabuz, Hughes, Lee, Speed, Glass, George, Solano, Hammann, Shearer, Ferguson, Anderson, Kerschbaum.
LEEDS UNITED (from): Morgan, Hoad, Wetherall, Wijnhard, Hasselbaink, Ribeiro, Bowyer, Hopkin, Granville, Hall, Howell, Harris, Woodgate, McPhail, Smith, Jackson, Robinson.
Suspensions: None.
Referee: G. Willard.

Sheff Wed v Leicester

Last season: 1-0



SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY'S Danny Wilson will be without both his Italian strikers today. Paolo Di Canio was expected to return from an 11-match suspension following his push on referee Paul Alcock, but is now AWOL in Italy, and in dispute with the Owls after they suspended him for two weeks without pay. Compatriot Benito Carbone is suspended. "Paolo has a decision to make but I don't know what that's going to be," Wilson said. "Whether he plays (ever again) for Sheffield Wednesday or not, I don't know. We will have to wait and see. It's a situation we could do without, but we are in it, so we just have to get on with it."

Martin O'Neill is trying to cope with a flu epidemic among his Leicester players. O'Neill is waiting on the fitness of midfielders Muzzy Izzet and Neil Lennon, who are both suffering from the bug and have not trained all week. Veteran defender Steve Walsh will return to the side after missing last weekend's defeat at Newcastle through illness but Tony Cottee is fit to play.

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY (from): Strick, Ahern, Jank, Walker, Booth, Hyde, Sanetti, Collier, Humphreys, Briscoe, Hitchcock, Sedoka, Emerson, Magilton, Rad, Sonner, Alexanderson, Clarke.
LEICESTER CITY (from): Ketter, Arfield, Walsh, Shindler, Taggart, Guppy, Ullustrone, Elliott, Savage, Lennon, Izzet, Impey, Zagorakis, Namark, Heskey, Cottee, Wilson, Oakes, Parkes, Fenton.
Suspensions: Wednesday: Carbone.
Referee: M. Reed.

Southampton v Chelsea (12 noon)

Last season: 1-0



SOUTHAMPTON COMPLETED the signing of French full-back Patrick Colletier from Marseilles on Christmas Eve and he might go straight into the side to face Chelsea today. The 33-year-old impressed Saints manager Dave Jones during a trial period and could boost an otherwise depleted team. Old Blues boy Mark Hughes will not be able to face his old club as he is suspended for two matches. Jones had 16 senior players unavailable last weekend as his side hauled themselves off the foot of the Premiership with a third win of the season over Wimbledon. Stuart Ripley, Matthew Oakley, Jasoo Dodd and Ken Monkou are all now close to full fitness. Francis Benali, Scott Marshall, John Beresford, Dave Hirst and David Howells are all still missing and young defender Gary Monk, who stood in for Monkou, is also suspended.

Gianluca Vialli welcomes Marcel Desailly back into his Chelsea squad. Bernard Lambourde is also expected to be fit while Gustavo Poyet was due to rejoin his team-mates on Christmas Eve after playing for Uruguay in Spain. Dennis Wise and Roberto di Matteo are suspended, so youth-team captain John Terry and Andy Myers are both added to the squad.

SOUTHAMPTON (from): Jones, Hiley, Luncheon, Monkou, Bridge, Pople, Kachoul, Oakley, Le Tissier, Beattie, Ostenslad, Dodd, Ropley, Warner, Stensgaard, Basham, Ordyn, Williams.
CHELSEA (from): Oe Goey, Peresko, Babayaro, Leboeuf, Poyet, Vialli, Ouberry, Ferrer, Lambourde, Zola, Morris, Goldback, Flo, Hitchcock, Nichols, Terry, Desailly, Myers.
Suspensions: Southampton: M. Hughes, Monk. Chelsea: Wise, Di Matteo.
Referee: O. Ellery.

Wimbledon v Charlton (12 noon)

Last season: No fixture



WIMBLEDON'S JOE KINNEAR has the chance to recall six-goal striker Jason Euell today. The England Under-21 international was banned for last week's 3-1 defeat at Southampton. Michael Hughes is holding off a double hernia operation until the end of the season so Kinnear has a full-strength squad to select from.

Paul Mortimer is out of both Charlton's Christmas fixtures with the ankle injury that forced him to miss the last two games. The midfielder picked up the knock in the game against Blackburn on 5 December and, although X-rays revealed no break, he has been unable to train since. Eddie Youds is available again after suspension for the short trip to Selhurst Park but manager Alan Curbishley is still without several players. Mark Bright, Kevin Lisbie, Anthony Barnes, Matt Holmes and Mark Bowen are still all out with injury and Curbishley may be forced to give debuts to youngsters Scott Parker and Paul Konchesky.

WIMBLEDON (from): Sullivan, Cunningham, Kumble, Perry, Blackwell, Thacher, C. Hughes, Earle, Eklou, Roberts, Gayle, Ardley, Leaburn, M. Hughes, Kennedy, Euell, Jupp, Carr, Ainsworth, Fear, Castledine.
CHARLTON ATHLETIC (from): Uic, Patterson, Mills, Powell, Tiler, Redfern, Youds, Rufus, Kinsella, Robinson, Newton, Hunt, Mendenso, Brown, S. Jones, K. Jones, Park, Royce, Konchesky.
Suspensions: None.
Referee: N. Barry.

Blackburn v Aston Villa

Last season: 5-0



KEVIN GALLACHER could present new manager Brian Kidd with a selection headache today after recovering from a hamstring injury. The Scottish striker's hopes of renewing his partnership with Chris Sutton, which last year brought 41 goals, are far from guaranteed as Kidd would find it difficult to leave out Nathan Blake after the former Bolton striker's two goals as Rovers came back from 3-0 down to draw at Nottingham Forest last weekend. Gallacher may have to make do with a place on the bench - which could even leave record £7.25m signing Kevin Davies with no part to play at all. Keith Gillespie

is competing with fellow Irishman Damien Johnson for the wide-right position while Jason Wilcox seems certain to frustrate Damien Duff's hopes of returning on the opposite wing. Central defender Darren Peacock is another likely to be named among the subs with Kidd keeping faith with the Stéphane Henchoz-Christian Daily partnership at the heart of defence.

Aston Villa's central defender Gareth Barry could be recalled today. The England Under-21 international was left out of Villa's 1-0 win at Charlton on Monday, but Villa manager John Gregory could start the match with three central defenders against

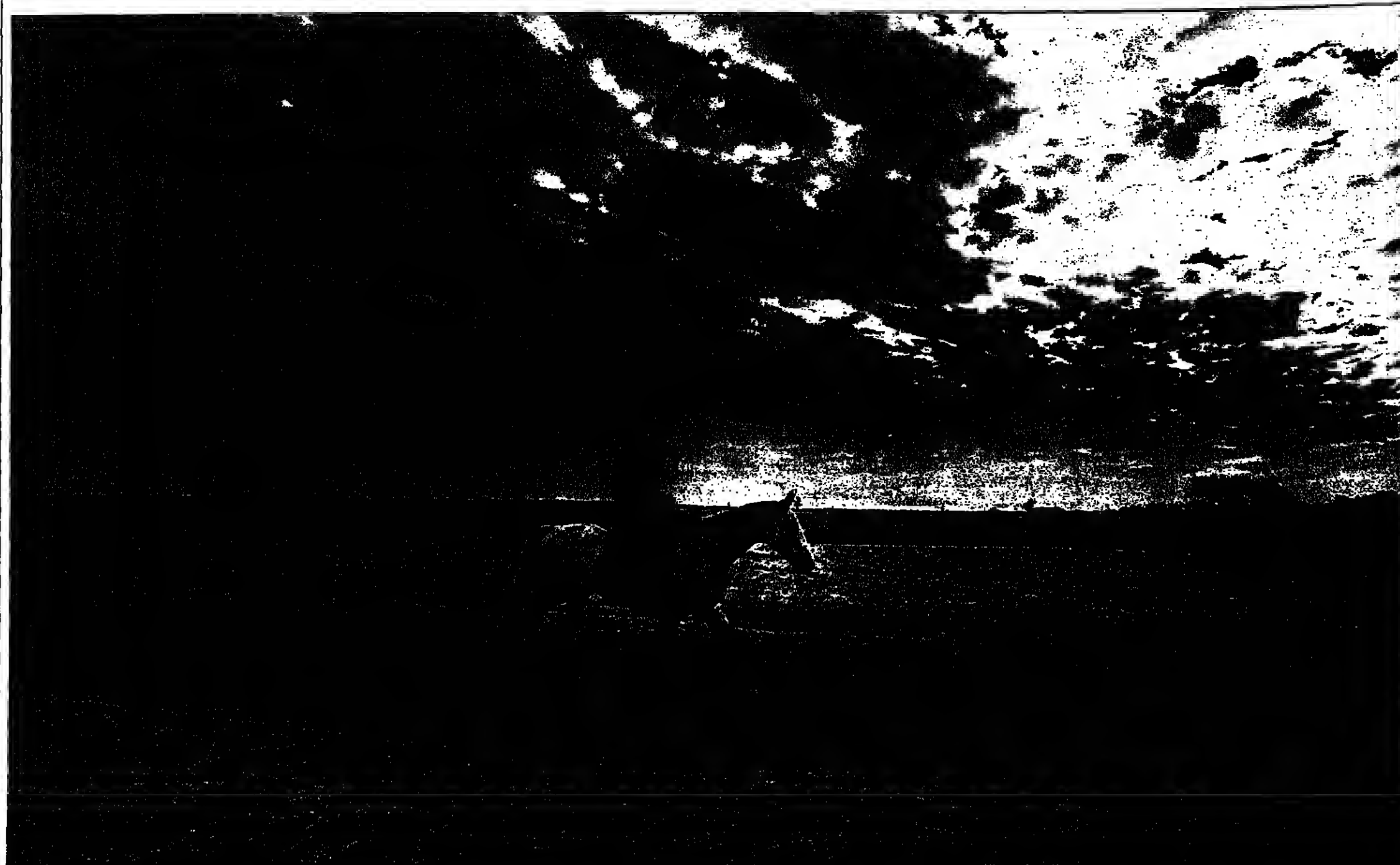
Rovers. Recalling Barry would also leave Gregory with the dilemma of who to leave out of his attack with Stan Collymore and Julian Joachim vying to join Dion Dublin up front. Paul Merson is still struggling with a back injury that looks certain to keep him out of the Bank Holiday game against Sheffield Wednesday on Monday.

BLACKBURN (from): Ryan, Kenna, Hendoch, Daily, Davidson, Gillespie, Shervood, McKinlay, Wilcox, Sutton, Blake, Johnson, Duff, Davies, Peacock, Ferris, Gallacher, Perez, Brookes, Maroon.
ASTON VILLA (from): Oakes, Watson, Enigou, Southgate, Barry, Wright, Thompson, Taylor, Hendrie, Jacklin, Buchin, Collymore, Scimeca, Grayson, Vassell, Charles, Ruffell.
Suspensions: None.
Referee: O. Gallagher.

SPORT

CURBISHLEY'S FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL P28 • HENMAN AIMS FOR TOP P20

Teeton Mill aiming to give punters another grey day at Kempton Park



Teeton Mill, one of the leading contenders for today's King George VI Chase at Kempton Park, walks back to his stables after morning exercise at his Herefordshire stables near Ross-on-Wye. Teeton Mill is hoping to follow in the tradition of Desert Orchid and One Man, two other grey horses to enjoy success in the King George VI Chase

Peter Jay

Golding 'treats' provide comfort and joy

Festivities at sea include flannel bath, cup of wine and a telephone call. By Stuart Alexander

LIKE ALL good sons not able to spend Christmas Day with their family, Mike Golding phoned home yesterday. His nearest and dearest had gathered at the family home in the Oxfordshire village of Dorchester and Golding wished them a merry Christmas.

However, once all the pleasantries had been exchanged, his grandmother had a question to ask. "When is Michael going to get a proper job?" she said. For the moment Golding's "proper job" is single-handed ocean racing and the British sailor made his call yesterday - as is becoming the custom for one of Britain's leading long-distance yachtsmen - from the other side of the world.

He is taking part in the Around Alone Race and yesterday his 60ft Team Group 4 boat was sailing south-west of Tasmania, still with a difficult 1,500 miles to run to the finish of the second leg of the race from Cape Town to Auckland.

This is Golding's fourth circumnavigation since 1992-93, and all four have seen him at sea for Christmas. Not that he lets the day pass by like any other. His Christmas treats to himself yesterday included a complete flannel bath followed by much of cured ham and crackers, washed down with a cup of wine, rounded off by a miniature Christmas cake from Harrods.

Golding started this 6,000-mile leg as overall leader, but by only two and a half hours from France's Isabelle Autissier. Now she has again been hit by gear problems and is heading for Tasmania for repairs, which will give Golding valuable breathing space.

But he is being chased by Autissier's compatriot, Marc Thiercelin, over whom Golding had a 12-hour advantage in the bank when they left Cape Town. Both of them had been caught between two weather systems



Mike Golding takes time out to open Christmas presents on board his yacht in the Tasman Sea

which had allowed the second leg leader, Giovanni Soldini of Italy, to stretch away by nearly 300 miles.

But yesterday Golding thought he had escaped into better breeze ahead of Thiercelin and opened up a 50-mile gap. "So I plan to enjoy Christmas when I get to New Zealand," he said.

Golding is not under pressure to try and close down Soldini because he had a five-day advantage from the first leg, but he expects to reduce the deficit over the last 1,500 miles. But, while he is now out of the danger zone as far as being rescued in the southern ocean is concerned, there are problems ahead. "There is a low forming up north which could give me a really bad headwind," he said. "These boats don't like those conditions and I have already suffered sheelds of minor damage." Going the other way, the fleet was assembling in Sydney for this morning's start of the classic 600-mile to Hobart, hoping that Golding's weather does not leave them with a lot of mess to sort out.

Villa aim to take revenge

ON WHAT is arguably the most "English" day in the football calendar, when huge crowds revel in the holly and the rivalry in a manner alien to continental Europe, the most English of championship challenges have a score to settle.

The score in question is the 5-0 drubbing which Aston Villa, the home-grown Premiership leaders, suffered at Blackburn in their first away fixture of 1998. Their last, which takes them back to Ewood Park as the campaign reaches the half-way point, is one of those end-of-year occasions for reflecting upon how rapidly things can change.

At the time of the January meeting, a Blackburn side under Roy Hodgson's managership held second place as opposed to today's 18th. Villa's embarrassment, exacerbated

FOOTBALL

BY PHIL SHAW

by a spitting incident involving Savo Milosevic, saw them slip to 12th position and led Brian Little to offer the resignation that was accepted a month later.

Now in the respective charge of Brian Kidd and John Gregory, the clubs reconvene with vastly different agendas. When Villa trailed Arsenal 2-0, they resembled the pacesetter distance runner who is burned off long before the bell. The second wind that brought victory that day and another at Charlton have gone a long way towards convincing the sceptics that they have the capacity to stay the distance.

Blackburn are unbeaten in three games since Kidd's ap-

pointment yet remain in a group of five who are in danger of being out of the bottom. The appearance of Dion Dublin, who spurned Rovers in favour of Villa, is likely to generate enough hot air to supply Branson's balloon. Keith Gillespie, on whose crosses he would have thrived, makes his home debut.

The late kick-off at Ewood means that Chelsea, who occupied the summit for two days until Monday night, are likely to return there for at least three hours should they win at another of the queasy quintet, Southampton.

The Saints produced their best display of the season against Wimbledon last weekend, but the suspension of Mark Hughes deprives them of a striker who always excels against former employers. To tilt the

balance further towards Chelsea, who are now unbeaten in 17 Premiership games, Marcel Desailly is in line to return, as might Graeme Le Saux.

With the top two both away, Manchester United will view the visit of the bottom club, Nottingham Forest, as a chance to regain ground lost in the home defeat by Middlesbrough. United know from bitter experience the folly of projecting ahead from the Boxing Day positions.

Exactly 12 months ago they had collected 46 of a possible 60 points after a sixth successive win. In their next game, United led Coventry with four minutes left, only for collective complacency to cost them all three points. Arsenal, it transpired, sensed that day all was not lost.

A Forest victory would pro-

voke calls for a stewards' inquiry. Dave Bassett's side could not stop United's second strike in the Worthington Cup, and only a shock to match any this season will prevent their equalling a club record of 16 League matches without a win.

Middlesbrough's success, which has put them in fourth place just 18 months after they plunged into the First Division, has been as refreshing and unexpected as Villa's ascendancy. To add the scalp of Liverpool to that of United, albeit an emasculated version compared with Anfield's finest, could tempt Teesside into declaring UDI.

However, as Villa discovered to their cost, Liverpool's form fluctuates wildly. The return of Paul Gascoigne, whose renaissance proves that abstinence makes the heart grow

fonder, may not be quite what Boro need to counter Michael Owen and Robbie Fowler, especially if Gary Pallister fails a fitness test.

Arsenal's followers, having greeted George Graham and David O'Leary with varying degrees of warmth lately, welcome another Highbury legend "home" when Ian Wright steps out with West Ham. This time last year the eventual Double winners stood fifth compared with sixth this morning, 13 points off the pace. Tonight they could be as few as four behind.

Another man going back is David Batty, whose recovery from cracked ribs may enable him to face Newcastle, the club he served until this month. But, with Duncan Ferguson and Alan Shearer primed to launch a potentially fearsome partnership, the visitors might

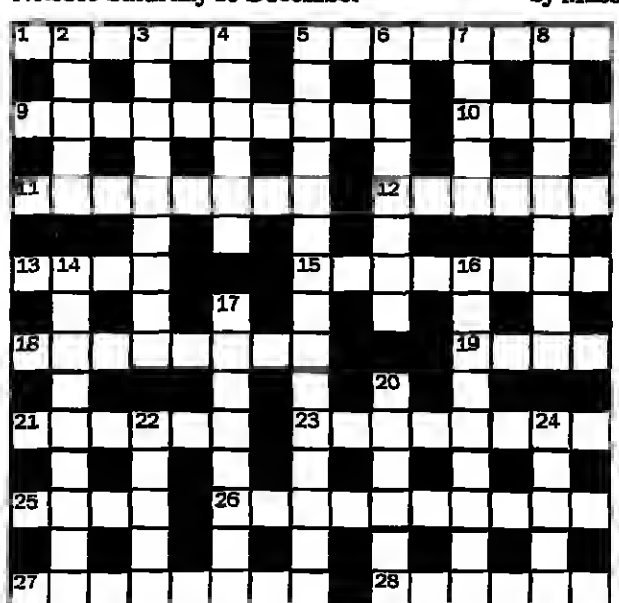
have chosen to have either of the stricken centre-backs, Lucas Radebe or Robert Mole, fit instead.

Flying in from Norway, like some on-loan Santa, the Molde goalkeeper Morten Bakke goes straight on to Wimbledon's hench as cover for the increasingly excellent Neil Sullivan at home to free-falling Charlton, a meeting of Selhurst Park's reluctant tenants, past and present.

Coventry's recent record against Tottenham is as good as it was against Leeds during George Graham's time there. Spurs' position in the lower echelons does not reflect their resurgent form under new management, so the outcome at Highfield Road could have a significance beyond the Sky Blues' customary bid to beat the drop.

THE SATURDAY CROSSWORD

No. 3803 Saturday 26 December by Mass

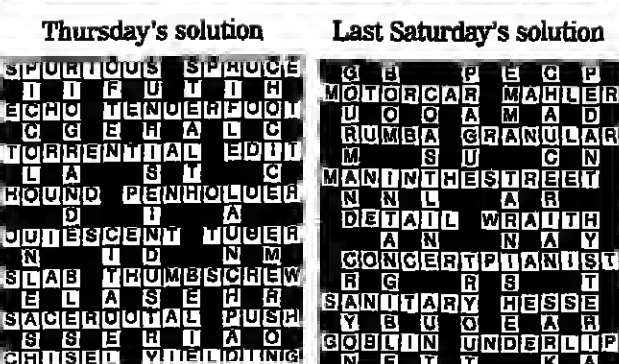


ACROSS

- 1 A reportedly considerable fling (6)
- 5 Make up short redundancy pay with increase (8)
- 9 Odd delays round East for Boxing Day viewers in Asia? (6,4)
- 10 Ship's non-nuclear escort (4)
- 11 Reach packed with anger's ultimate catch (8)
- 12 Upset table (3,3)
- 13 Case that is sent back, Boxing Day? (4)
- 15 Fine's stylish for this vessel (8)
- 18 A risk's involved with wet sporting item (5-3)
- 19 Regret Boxing Day is raw (4)
- 21 Rule out Boxing Day? According to reformer (6)
- 23 Admit, before being active and holding service, is robbing (8)
- 25 Old king, one at end of rank (6)
- 26 Insists on carpets I put in being shaggy (10)
- 27 Make light of pawn sacrifice (4,4)
- 28 Country copper's Boxing Day? (6)

DOWN

- 2 Book yielding fine miscellany (5)
- 3 At last, it's Boxing Day! (5,4)
- 4 Spoke with artist on phone (6)
- 5 Keen on horse for Boxing Day, one showing definite development? (5)
- 6 Wasted time going after female writer (8)
- 7 Check root springing up (5)
- 8 Cooked for Sunday? Overworked, Boxing Day? (4-5)
- 14 Bit of a storm's brewed (9)
- 16 Subsidence, including hour's erosion (9)
- 17 Coffee mill found in Spain, note (8)
- 20 Incomplete relief, Boxing Day, for some at sea? (6)
- 22 This chap on Boxing Day will be hung over (5)
- 24 Entente initially present in cordial relation (5)



The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners will be announced in January.

Ward unhappy with Rovers' wage offer

BY ALAN NIXON

ASHLEY WARD'S £4.5m move to Blackburn Rovers is in danger of collapsing over his personal demands.

The big striker has been discussing terms with Rovers for the past 48 hours, after Barnsley finally consented to the sale. However Ward and his advisors, the Professional Footballers' Association, have been unable to agree on his salary at Blackburn, and Brian Kidd's planned capture could be off.

Ward is looking for around £1m per year, but Blackburn's offer falls well short of that figure. They are thinking in terms of £650,000 per year. Rovers' owner, Jack Walker, has a pay ceiling and no one is allowed to earn more than £1m at Blackburn. Only Chris Sutton comes close to that figure.

The PFA negotiated Sutton's latest contract and know the pay scale he is on. Ward will not sell himself short and could now go to another club. Leeds,

Leicester, Sheffield Wednesday and even Ward's old club Derby County are in the hunt.

Tottenham Hotspur have completed the signing of the German international midfielder, Steffen Freund, from Borussia Dortmund, according to German sources.

Borussia have confirmed that Freund had signed for Spurs in a deal which is thought to be worth £750,000, with the player signing a contract until 2003. The Spurs manager, George Graham, and his director of football David Pleat held talks with the 28-year-old Freund at White Hart Lane on Tuesday.

Newcastle have pulled out of a £5.2m deal to bring the Milan winger, Ibrahim Ba, to St James' Park after the Frenchman failed a medical. The 25-year-old international was on Tyneside on Wednesday after

the two clubs agreed terms, but stringent tests revealed a long-standing knee injury and scuppered the prospective move.

Southampton have completed the signing of the French full-back, Patrick Colletier, from Marseilles. The 33-year-old's transfer is expected to cost the Saints around £150,000.

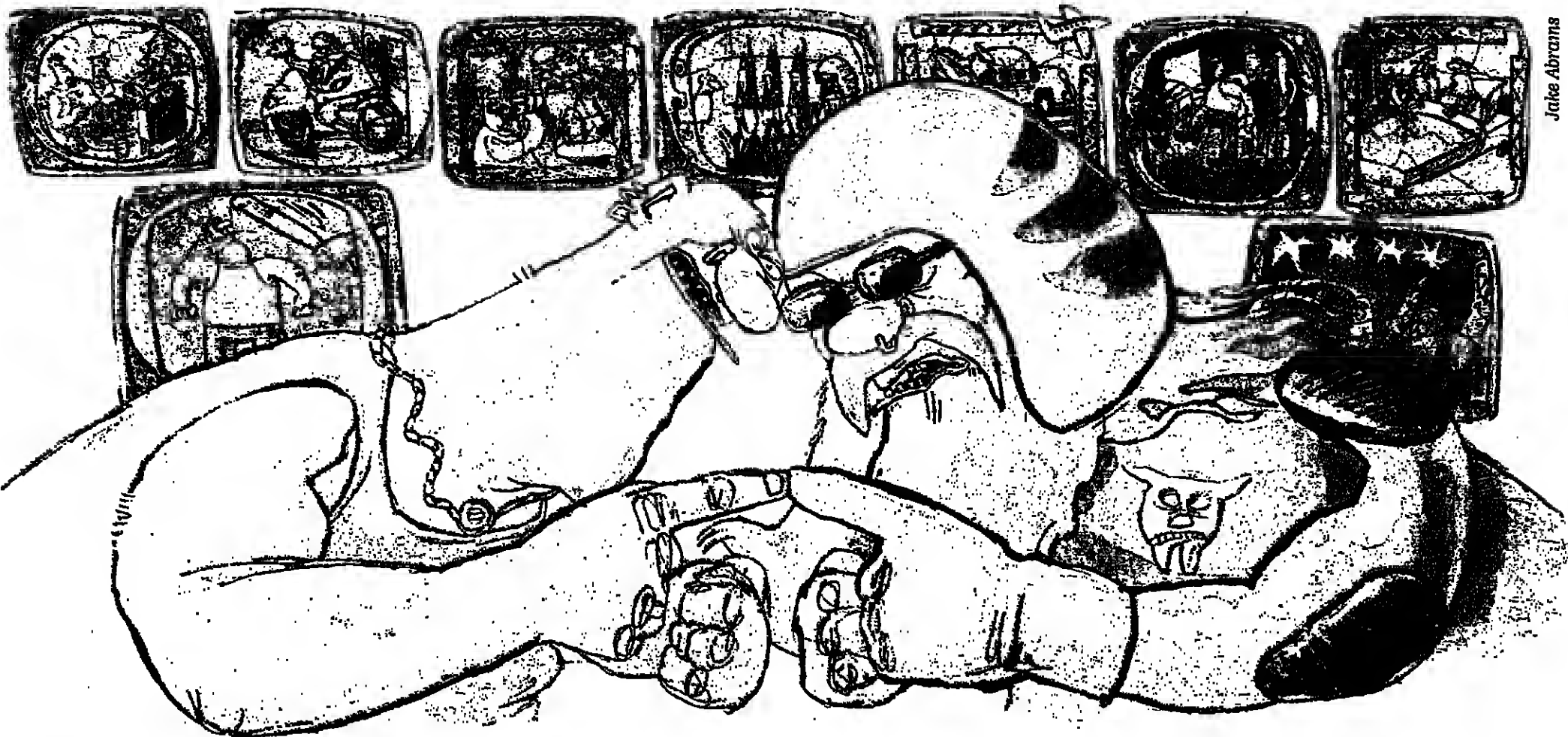
Sheffield United have signed the Norwegian centre-back, Anders Jacobsen, from Start for a nominal fee. The Blades completed the five-month deal for the 30-year-old on Christmas Eve, after being held up by paperwork.

The Blades' manager, Steve Bruce, will not include Jacobsen in his plans for today's fixture at Birmingham City. Bruce said: "The Norwegian season finished five weeks ago - it would be wrong to pitch him in straight away. He's a big, typically English type of centre-half, and we'll see how he goes until the end of the season."

WEEKEND REVIEW

COMMENT • ARTS & BOOKS • COUNTRY & GARDEN • MOTORING • PROPERTY • MONEY • TRAVEL

 <p>SPORTS YEAR OF SHAME ESSAY, PAGE 5</p>	 <p>GUIDE TO BOXING DAY WALKS COUNTRY, PAGE 11</p>	 <p>TOAST THE NEW YEAR IN STYLE SHOPPING, PAGE 12</p>	 <p>WHERE TO GO TO GET AWAY IN 1999 TRAVEL, PAGE 13</p>
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Jake Abrams

Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knyght

BY MARTIN NEWELL

The Kyng's crewe chilled at Camelot that Krystmaz
With many tasty geezere, gotte up in good gear
Blokes with a reppe, well-rayed in a ruldre.
People who culde partie with a vengeance
The do went onne for dayes and dayes
Arthur's burde mucked-out the place some mornynges
Emptied ashtrays, clerid out cack and cannes
Hoovered-up the roaches and the rubishe
Come midday it all went raydeo rentals agayne
For they were as a Millwalle posse bygge style
All of themme on Stella beere and shortes
all daye.

Laddes druncke and stinketing
Loades of booz and scaffe
Everybody thinkng
Somethynge myghte go off

New Yere had hardly hitte home
When Arthur telefonede for a Thai Takeaway
Loude cryed the laddes for more lagere
Arthur shoutede: "Shutte itte - the sprogges are sleepen.
Queene Brenda has gotte the arseyake over this
She must go to B&Q fyrste thynge for the Sayles.
Sir Gary, see if there's any signe of that scamme yet."
But scarcely had Sir Gary got to garden gayte
When a bigge bastarde on a byke burste inne
Straight up the halle, oil on the Azminstere
Queen Brenda's Ykea lampe lying flatte.
No kydingge. This was a honey-monstre.
Grene leather, grene leggynges, grene scid-hidde.
Laddes lyke legges. Legges lyke tuggabotes.
Bigge bushey beard down to his beite buckle.
Strayght uppe.

On his bakke a Death's hedde
Manneres very rude
And the Grene Knyght said:
"You fond of hospitall fooder?"

The verdant knyght gayve it sunne verbal:
"Who's the gawr? You bunche of hayre-dressers."
The Kyng was not beste pleased about this
And looked about for backupe from the laddes.
But nobody wantee a rukke bfore the nosebagge arrives
You ever tried Thai Takeaway wythe broken teethe?
"Anybody wante summe?" Asked the Grene Byker
"I thought you was supposed to be a hardie crewe."

You culde see Arthur was just about to lose itte
Quietly spoke Sir Gawayne: "Outside. Right now."
Arthur said: "No leave itte Wayne." but too layte.
This almyghty boundie begonne wythe the berque.
Wayne welled the wlonke with a wheel brayce,
Dogges barkng, Naggibour's lyghts come on. The lotte.
Thence came the Fylthe. Blues and twos. Wyth back-uppe.
The Grene Knyght - and full credite to hymme - told the Fylthe
Itte was a misunderstanding. So offe they trotted.
Thenne he turned hym rounde to Gawayne and sayde:
"You! Returne matche. Yee're's tyme. My turfe. Be there.
Or else."

Helmet nowe wyth dente
Bloode on daygloe veste
Offe the toeragge roared
Somewhere to the weste.

Gawayne slinges his Benne Shermanne in the Zannussi
Breakes open a Beckes and belches lyke a bastarde.
"Thesse is welle bloddie seryious - I'm goner nede a motore."
Kyng Arthur said it would be sortede. Saye no more.
Wynter draggede onne the Springe and the FA Graff
Millwalle didn't gette a lookke-in they woz robbed.
So the entyre crewe, Arthur, Sir Gawayne, Sir Darrren
Sir Warren, Sir Lee, Sir Shaun, Sir Kevin of New Crosse
And alle the othere Johns fenne to Ibeetha for a fortynght's furre.
Muche drynkeing, fighteing and horizontel joggeing was theyr.
Then after, was deportayscheon and some payeing of fynes.
Soone cayme Autumme and the Grene soddyng Wynter agayne.
Wayne, his yeare near uppe, must taccone thys lossere.
The laddes had a whippe-rounde bfore hande.
Gawayne was gotte in ordere by the boyse.
Eighteen-hole Doleke Marlyn's, dodgey Mayce gosse
Combatte keacques, welle-sharpened Stanleye Knyve
Numbere two croppe, Crombie, Ffiorde Cyortina.
The cattles knackeres! For he was welle-tooled uppe.
"Putte the bastarde oute of busines!" Cryed the Kyng.
"Itte's welle in hande. The gytte's gotte ti comeing."
Calles bakke Gawayne.

The trippe to the northwest as bade as it could be
Contraflowe, roadeworks and a smache-up by Stoke
Gawayne, as it goes, ending up neare Northe Wayles
Hitte was Krystmaz Eve and he was cremecracked.
By stroke of lucke, Gawayne mette another mayte,
Bertilak, who ran a garage wyth knyghtclubbe tackled onne.
Well apointed, as it happened. Usede to runne wyth Arthur.

What a gaffe! Coquetayle barre. Faery lyghts. Optices
Raised aerylin sheepskinne dais, smokee glasse tabil.
Waterbedde. And thys woz juste the gueste bedroom.
"Staye here as longe as you lyke Wayne," said Bertilak.
"I knowe the mushe you're after. A righte yaa-hoo.
He lives nate two myles from here. Helpe yourselfen.
Drynkes - whatever. My lady Lynnette will looke after you."
Gawayne culden't believe it and gratefule he gaspes.
"Toppe geezere!"

Krystmaz was keple in a blur of beere and Bacardie
Gawayne laye in bedde layte lookeng at Loadde
Many a lockke-in he hadde in Bertilak's barre
Drynking. He gotte compleetley Schindleres Liste
Thenne three dayes bfore the bygge battle, Bertilak sayed,
"Oute of Bacardie. I've gotte to go to Cashe and Caerrie.
I'll be back layter. Mynde the missus for me."
That mornyng, Lynette came into Gawayne's chamber
A handsome tarte, feisty and fittle-looking.
She was tryeing it onne but Gawayne kepede coole.
Whene Bertilak was back he said, "Awryght thenne?"
"Sweet as," sayes Wayne. "Sweet as."
Bertilak binges Gawayne a bottle of Bacardie
"Toppe man. Give ti summe lewinski thenne."
Welle good.

Come the nexte daye, Bertilak drove to Droitwich
To see a manne about the manfold on his motore.
Some drille. Chille oute dude. Helpen yourselfe.
Gawayne was waykened wyth a wet tongue in hys eare
"Leave it oute Lynette. You are Bertilak's beste burde."
By eveneing, Bertilak is bakke wyth hys wafy Y-Reg
"Anythynge happened lyke?" He looked at Lynette.
Gawayne buttoned itte, nate wysheing to saye nuthinne.
Bertilak binges hym a boze of Beckes beere.
"Sortede thenne."

The thyrdaye, Bertilak beckons Gawayne, going.
"I've got a litle tyckle goeng offe with some tomfoolery.
Looke aftere Lynette - there'll be a longe drynk layter."
Gawayne is obed whenne Lynette comes inne
Ful beautifule, hayre falleng downe, wonderebra
Legges withoute ende ande some craftie contyrvaunce
Begot fromme Janetregger, crotchales cammickeres
Thiss was almoste too muche. Gawayne was gaggeing
But by prayer to St Clinlaune he kept his wingknut onne.
He beggede one thynng from hys mayte's missus:
Batteries for his Gaymeboys, flatte synce Bozeing daye.

Thys she gives him ande he selles for a snogge.
Wythe no runtie-tuntie. For thalle woz ryght oute.
Thenne Bertilak poppes inne and pourses a Pernod.
He gives Gawayne a gold signet ringe for good lucke.
Lynette loungeing blisse oute to Teddie Fenderegasse
"Worde in your shell-lyke Wayne. Did she trye it onne?"
"No chance."

Nowe downede the daye of the returne rukke
Gawayne got into gears, wobbile but welle uppe for itte.
A myle uppe the roade he sees a signe sayeing
Private Dryve Keep Oute. Bye nowe he's brickyng itte.
The Grene Knyght's garage was huge - a hoogstraalen.
Heareing bangeing from wythinne, he warnes:
"Come over here tffe you thynk you're hardie enough."
"You slagge." The grebo was giving it alle of thatte.
"Bottled oute? You, snowedroppe!" Goes Gawayne.
This was takeing the pyssse for the Grene Knyght
He swunge at Gawayne's bounce with bayseball battie.
Twyce more he twattede hym. Wayne wouldn't go downe
Whene Wayne mayced hym, it seemed to slowe hym uppe
Butte bakke he came with a kicke to the cryckette sette.
Whych causede Wayne's eyes to welle watere
Hade enoughe have you? Hade enoughe you bastarde?
Gawayne gritted his teethe. "Do you tayke Snyitch?"
They backkede off.

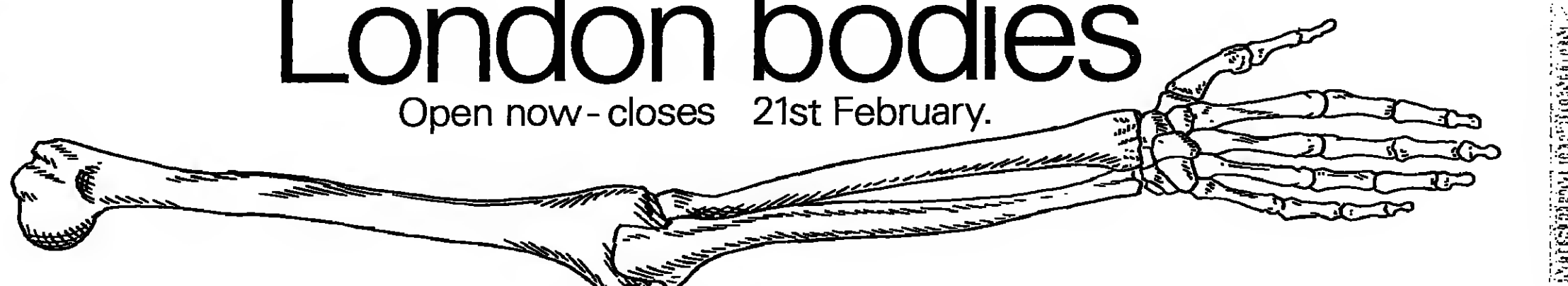
The Grene Knyght tooks his helmet off his heade
Underneathe itte was Bertilak, Gawayne's host.
Got uppe lyke a grebo - the fulle maunty.
Gawayne, gobbesmackede attie being setuppe
Kickedde attie hys Cyortino doore, sweareing stille.
Bertilak said: "Thiss wasn't downe to me, Wayne.
The Kyng had heard it said you was alle mouthe
He wantede to see howe you cayme uppe in the washe
But since you're sounde, we'll calle thys a rezulte."
Wythe thatte, the Grene Knyght shunge a can of Stella
At Wayne who stashedde his Stanleye Knyve awaye
Thenne aftere they repairedde to Gabriella's
A nearby knyghtclubbe knowne for lappedauncing
Whereupone theye gayve the shortes a severe caneing
Resulttng in a rukke wythe seven bounceres
Ande another runne-in wyth the locale Bylle
Baled oute by Lynette onn Mondaye mornyng
Stille singeing "Na one lykes us. We don'te cayre."
As itte goes.

The Ende

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TOMORROW IN
THE INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY

REVIEW



Blue Tigers: a short story
by Jorge Luis Borges.
Published in Britain for
the first time



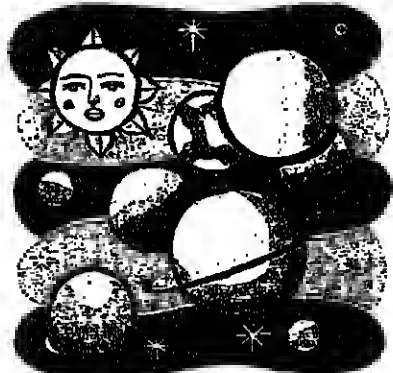
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why our clocks have
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REAL LIFE



Your year ahead with
the stars

PLUS

Labour: it can only get
worse, by Siôn Simon



Dressing the Cathedral No 5: The baby Jesus (£5.99 from the toy shop over the road) lies in his crib in Ely cathedral's Nativity scene

Brian Harris

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number, fax to 0171 293 2056 or e-mail to letters@independent.co.uk
E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity

Taming tyrants

Sir: As a humanitarian, I feel obliged to assist David Aaronovitch in finding a non-military solution to the Iraq crisis ("Unfortunately, there really was no alternative to bombing Iraq", 22 December).

During the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, Ayatollah Khomeini needed to be "kept in his cage" with not a whimper from the British or the Americans when Iraq invaded its neighbour, and used chemical weapons against Iran.

Now it seems that recently Saddam Hussein has become a brutal dictator. The Anglo-American definition of a ruthless dictator is one who no longer falls into line with Washington's diktat.

There is another state within the region which has defied the will of the international community. This state continues to threaten its neighbours, indeed has illegally occupied the territories of not one but three countries. It has abused the rights of citizens living under its rule and has been a serial breaker of promises in the peace process. It has amassed a stockpile of nuclear weapons and refuses to sign up to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. This state is Israel.

Saddam Hussein is a tyrant. He should be made to comply with Security Council resolutions and should be prevented from acquiring horrific weaponry. Israel must also be made to comply to UN resolutions. It must also be open to weapons inspections.

There are over 1 billion Muslims in the world. Islam is the fastest growing religion, with an increasing political

influence in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the former Soviet republics.

The leaders of the Arab countries represent a failed nationalist ideology. The leaders of the Western world would do well to realise that the kings and self-appointed presidents in the Arab world will not remain in power for long. A bitter and resentful Islamic world, suspicious of the West and the United Nations, is the last thing that Britain and America would wish to create. We are, I fear, fast approaching its birth.

The alternative to bombing, Mr Aaronovitch, is a comprehensive and just Middle East peace process. Only then are the tyrants exposed and isolated.

J SARWAR
Edmonton, London

Sir: I believe the British and US bombing of Iraq has been unethical and ineffective in its objectives. Saddam is a vicious ruler, but how can ordinary Iraqis in a weakened state do anything to change their rulers?

If sanctions against Iraq were lifted, Saddam would no longer be able to use the fact that sanctions imposed by the West are stopping sufficient imports of food and medicine. Thirty per cent of the money received from the sale of oil has to be paid to creditors, not used to buy food. Why not let the Iraqis sell as much oil as they wish and import anything except armaments?

The Iraqi government would no longer have any excuse for refusing entry to UNCOM inspectors.
JOAN HUGHES
London N16

Clinton's wisdom

Sir: The ability of some politicians and most of the media to misread the public mood is breathtaking.

There are many in this country who are uncertain about the effectiveness and morality of bombing Iraq, but none the less understand the complexities faced by those who take such strategic decisions, and that doing nothing was not an option.

In the United States Clinton is pilloried by Republicans and press alike, yet has the highest approval ratings of any president since the Second World War. His recent advice to his demoralised staff revealed the positive side of a complex individual. He told them to do their best and put their trust in the good sense of the American people. The wisdom of those words will be seen over the coming months.

JAMES MALLINSON
London NW3

Sir: As a direct result of its persecution of President Clinton, the Republican Party has lost not one, but two of its leaders.

It has got itself into a situation where two of the articles of impeachment recommended by its majority on the House Judiciary Committee were defeated with the help of its own Congress members. It seems the real story in the US is the self-immolation of the Republican Party.

As so often happens, hatred and bitterness have eaten away at those who perpetrate them. If Shakespeare were alive today he would already be

sharpening his quill to dramatise the "split-screen" presidency, complete with the slaughter of the innocents in Iraq.
PAUL WALTER
Newbury, Berkshire

Sir: What would we think if *Hail to the Chief* were played every time Blair appeared and we all stood to attention, knowing that he couldn't get his Bills through Parliament ("Cruise missiles won't stop the dangers facing US democracy", 19 December)?

The stuffy old British may be lumbered with hereditary peers, a monarchy and an ancient non-constitution but our system is more efficient than the American one: we are not locked in a late eighteenth-century colonial time warp. You can't have strong leaders with an American-style constitution and you need strong leaders if you want to be world policeman.

State-of-the-art smart bombs are useless without decisive leadership. The Americans need a prime minister based on a majority in the House of Representatives, a less powerful senate, a dignified non-executive president and some form of PR encouraging a wider range of parties.

Then they'd have stronger government based on more active voter participation.
KEN CLARK
Bedford

Star of wonder

Sir: What is the point of trying to explain the Star of Bethlehem by investigating contemporary astronomical

events, as reported by Roger Highfield (Saturday Essay, 19 December)? The relevant passage in Matthew's Gospel, far from giving useful evidence, raises more questions than it answers.

What "magi" would come from "the east", and why would they go to Jerusalem? How could they know that a rising star belonged to "the king of the Jews", when there already was one?

Rather than search for contemporary appearances of comets or novae or conjunctions or occultations of planets, why not just put the story of the star in the same categories as the stories of the sun standing still and darkness covering the earth - not astronomy, or even astrology, but mythology?
ANNA FREEMAN
Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire

Sir: In a recent school project we investigated the cost of Christmas.

We discovered that the cost of an average family Christmas is about £200 and believe that much could be saved if people became more aware of what they were being persuaded to buy.

One of our teachers introduced us to a friend who, on a visit to the Gambia, had been hospitalised. She was so appalled by the conditions that she now spends much of her time raising money for the hospital in Bansang. We worked out that it would be possible for a family to have a very happy Christmas and save at least £200. This would provide a reconditioned wheelchair for a child in the Gambia. A cannula, which is a

means of giving life-saving medication, costs only 82p, the equivalent of three Mars bars.

For three days we raised money at school and then presented our findings to our parents at the school carol service. Our friend faxed the hospital and, as we sang our carols, a candle was lit in every ward in Bansang. Our parents dug into their pockets and we will be sending enough money to provide four wheel chairs and 365 cannulas, one for each day of 1999. Our enterprise lasted only five days and involved a relatively small effort but its impact will still be enormous on people the other side of the world.

BEN SUMMERS
DAVID TIBBETS
All Saints C of E (Aided) Middle School
Northampton

IN BRIEF

Sir: At 77, I walk with a stick, having osteoporosis, diabetes, varicose veins, occasional gout and 50 per cent deafness. I admit to the odd dodgy spell (after my five or six daily pints of Pedigree Bitter). But I cannot recognise the "ortical" of Jack O'Sullivan's 75-year-old (report, 21 December). Shame on Age Concern for being a party to such a caricature. Life is for living.
CLAUDE VERRIER
Brightlingsea, Essex

Sir: Mr Hague and his fellow Europhobes clearly have a vision of Britain free from rule by Brussels, thus leaving us free to carry out the wishes of Washington.
W A WALSH
Gravesend, Kent

THE WEASEL

Mrs W marks her birthday by purchasing a truffle at huge expense, but unaccountably the delicacy fails to appear...



SORRY TO harp on about grub on St Dyspepsia's Day, but at least the following vignette does not concern Christmas. As I remarked last week, Mrs Weasel has just notched up a significant birthday.

By way of celebration, she decided to hold a small brunch. This American invention has long held an almost mystical appeal for my wife. She has never quite forgiven me for spoiling Sunday brunch in a fancy Miami hotel a few years ago, when severe gastric problems prompted my rapid departure before we'd had a single bite. Last Sunday, I managed to avoid an repetition of this mishap by taking stringent efforts not to consume any uncooked Mexican sausage beforehand.

Shopping for this wine-dine commenced in an Italian cornucopia in Soho. After buying a ruinous quantity of prosciutto and a Dolomite-sized chunk of Parmesan, Mrs W's restless eye alighted on a handwritten notice announcing the arrival of a consignment of white truffles. "Now, that would be something different," she announced. The deli went all swimmy before me as Mrs W commenced negotiations over the stratospherically-priced fungi. The transaction took on an engagingly

illicit quality when an assistant produced a box filled with small tissue-wrapped packages.

She disinterred a few smallish, garbled, grey lumps. Though Elizabeth David writes of seeing "white truffles as large as tennis balls" in Turin shops, the examples presented to us looked exactly like well-worn rubber erasers. After being approvingly sniffed by the manager, our selected fungus was put in a tiny tub and surrounded by rice for protection. "Have it on scrambled eggs. Use a small grater," yelled the manager, as we scooted off clutching our 10-quid deal.

On the day of the brunch, our patch of south-east London was transformed into a corner of New York's Upper West Side. I prepared a precarious mound of smoked salmon and cream cheese bagels, while Mrs W began a production line of eggs Benedict, that most quintessentially American of breakfast dishes. There were also potato latkes, hash browns, blini with lumpfish roe, fresh fruit kebabs and a huge bowl of blueberries.

The consumption of this Mount Rushmore of stateside provender was irrigated by vats of Buck's fizz and bloody Mary. It

was only when the last of our guests had burped their farewell, that Mrs W suddenly clapped a hand to her forehead: "The truffle! I forgot all about it." Now there's a pity, isn't it?

ODD THINGS are happening at *Time*. This week, the magazine gained much attention by its somewhat self-contradictory choice of Bill Clinton and Kenneth Starr as joint "men of the year". Bizarre as this schizophrenic split is, it is not nearly as off-the-wall as an opinion expressed in *Time* the week before.

This appeared in an essay by someone called Rod Usher. Under the cringe-making headline "The Hair of the Dogma", he expounded the proposition that "tyrants tend to facial hair". In support of his view that "face hair is camouflage, and despots are typically men of disguise", Usher supplied a long list of unpleasant generalisations who had sported a variety of moustaches: Hitler, Stalin, Franco, Saddam, not to mention our Christmas guest Augusto Pinochet.

Adding the even more barbarous examples of Ho Chi Minh, Lenin and Khome-

ini, Usher concluded: "the ultimate proof of this theory is Fidel Castro."

By the hairs on my chinny-chin, I mused, the blighter's on to something. I bet you anything you like that the phizzes of Attila the Hun, Tamerlane and Ozymandias were all strangers to the razor. On the side of beardsies, Abe Lincoln, WE Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli were all pillars of enlightenment, while the virtually hairless Mussolini might be regarded as the dictator's dictator. But surely the most significant example to disprove Usher's case is still very much with us. The last Tory prime minister but one was the most dogmatic leader we've had since the war, and she had no beard to speak of.

HEAVEN KNOWS, I'm no nit-picker - but when you spot a glaring anachronism in a display mounted by a learned body, there is an obligation to engage in a spot of whistle-blowing. A couple of years ago, I gave a smallish warble after visiting the Geffrye Museum in Dalston, London E2. Now it's time to give a full-breathed blast. Dedicated to English domestic interiors, this excellent institution re-creates the ap-

pearance of living-rooms through the centuries in a series of converted almshouses. Each Christmas, the museum decks out its displays with decorations and foodstuffs appropriate to the various periods.

My particular gripe concerns a tableau devoted to the 18th century, which at this time of year is augmented by the aftermath of a Christmas feast, including a number of empty oyster shells. Nothing wrong with oysters being part of an 18th-century meal, of course. As everyone knows, they were a favourite snack of the time. Dr Johnson even bought them for his cat, Hodge. Except that, as I pointed out in an ostreological aside two years ago, the shells on display come from the wrong kind of oysters. They are deep-shelled rock oysters from the Pacific, which would surely have been a bit whiffy by the time they arrived on a London dinner plate. The type eaten by Dr Johnson and his pals was the flat-shelled native oyster.

For the first time in two years, I happened to be passing the Geffrye the other day, so I popped in to see its festive displays. Now I don't want to give the impression that I'm some sort of obsessive nutcase - perish the thought - but I couldn't resist steal-

ing a glance at the 18th-century section. Guess what? The erroneous Pacific oysters were still there. As far as I could tell, they were exactly the same shells as last time. Since the Geffrye is not a million miles from the New Billingsgate Market, it shouldn't be too hard to get hold of a few dozen historically correct shellfish. And if the museum requires any help with consuming the hivalves prior to display, it knows whom to call.

ONE AMUSING aspect of the Mandelson affair is the euphonious moniker of his 24-year-old adviser, Benjamin Wegg-Prosser. By a strange coincidence, Geoffrey Robinson, the New Labour millionaire, is strikingly reminiscent of Alexander "Oofy" Prosser, official moneyed man of the Drone's Club. I cite the following exchange between Oofy and Bingo Little from P G Wodehouse's *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*.

"Bingo, old chap, don't I seem to recall hearing you ask for a fiver or something?"

"A tenner."

Oofy shook his head. "It's not enough," he said. "Would you mind if I made it fifty?"

"Not a bit," replied Peter. "I mean Bingo."

THE INDEPENDENT

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A year that has defined the Labour government and ourselves

LOOKING BACK over the year, Peter Mandelson's period in office shed as much light on the nature of this government as did his sudden leaving of it. In just 150 days in the Cabinet, he symbolised the emergence of New Labour from the dark into the light. When a whisperer-in-ears becomes Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, he has to make real decisions. Mr Mandelson defined himself, and the Government of which he was briefly a member, as pragmatic, pro-European and with his liberal heart in the right place.

He faced, for example, an important test of the Government's commitment to a competitive free market when he had to make a highly technical decision about the future of the Post Office. He fudged it. He was not interested in producing the best economic solution, but in balancing the political forces: so we were treated to a rhetorical mixture of public service and the free market. New Labour is not, then, really dedicated to competition – but neither, of course, were the Conservatives, transferring monopolies lock, stock and pork-barrel to the private sector.

The Independent feels strongly about competition, not simply because this newspaper was launched to give readers choice or because we have felt the rough edges of Rupert Murdoch's monopolistic tendencies. We believe that one of the reasons for Britain's relative economic under-performance is its unenterprising culture and the feebleness of governments in dealing with the anti-competitive instincts of large corporations. The machinery of trust-busting is far, far too slow in this country.

However, we do not want to give the impression – which can easily arise from the instant commentary of day-to-day journalism – that this Government is a miserable failure. Tony Blair has done much of which we approve, starting in Northern Ireland, and across a broad front in beginning to reverse the social division of the Thatcher years. The minimum wage, set at a level that will not destroy jobs, the raising of child benefit, the attention to finding work for the unemployed and lone parents, and the focus on the causes of social exclusion are all welcome.

Above all, in its stewardship of the wider economy, the Government has not yet made any obvious mistakes, which must be counted as an achievement of some magnitude – and a historic one for the Labour Party. It was right to make the Bank of England independent, although there is a problem with the asymmetry of the Bank's inflation target, which gives the monetary policy committee an incentive to keep interest rates too high. And, in practice, although we have quarrelled with the speed of its response to evidence of the economy slowing down, the committee seems sensitive to the dangers. The Government's real error has been a political one – that of promising to "end the cycle of boom and bust", which is bound to feed a sense of betrayal when the business cycle reasserts itself. Above and beyond this lies the question of how soon the British cycle will converge with continental Europe's, and how soon Britain will join the euro.

Europe

ONE OF the most important of the Government's positive achievements is to mark a turning point in the history of our erratic relations with our neighbours. Mr Blair, to his great credit, has begun a long zig towards Europe after the unsteady zag that was taken in the opposite direction during the late Major years.

Mr Mandelson was important, not just as an exemplar of New Labour's hollow morality, but as a pro-European who said some suggestive things which ought to be included in any instant anthology of quotations. In January, he said: "Europe can be a superpower without being a superstate." Well, can it? Agree with it or not – and, broadly, we do agree – it was a provocative statement that asked the fundamental questions about the purpose of the European Union which ought to be asked at this point, six days away from the formal launch of the euro. We want the EU to be neither a superstate nor a superpower in the Cold-War sense, but we want it to have influence in the world, to be a force for democracy, and the rule of law independently of the United States. For that reason, Mr Blair's plans for greater defence co-operation are as welcome as his closeness to the US over Iraq is suspect. An EU defence force would not be a "European army" any more than Nato forces are a "North Atlantic army"; in that respect, the Euro-sceptic spectre of the federal superstate cannot be invoked.

For most of this century, a currency has been as potent a symbol of nationhood as an army, but the world is changing. From next Friday, we will experience an intensification of the forces that render the idea of national monetary sovereignty either illusory or counter-productive. We will be a middle-sized economy on the edge of a huge single-currency zone that is bigger than the US. We are already following interest rate changes across the euro zone within days. We have to come to terms with a new idea of national sovereignty. If the constitution of the European Central Bank worries us – and it should, because it is secretive and undemocratic – we are only going to be able to change it from the inside. It is true that, in a large, unified market, there will be a constant gravitational pull towards political union – but that should be a good thing, provided that it always proceeds at the speed of the most reluctant member of the convoy.

It is the very endlessness of pro-European rhetoric – the "ever-closer union" of the treaties – that is a problem, because any sceptic horror can be placed convincingly



somewhere down the track. That is why the urgent hushiness of the EU is to entrench the notion of consent, so that citizens have a real say in what matters to them and the language of "imposition from Brussels" is expunged. Radical notions, such as directly-elected EU commissioners, are needed, especially as the Union grows. But we have to embrace the future in a more confident frame of mind. The economic changes of the information age will transform – are already transforming – the significance of the nation state. Britain should be leading the charge. If for no other reason than that, alone among Europeans, we do not have to park our language in a museum of national heritage in order to speak to the future.

At least, after years of dithering, of accepting large steps towards European integration on the basis that they were technical free-market measures and then bitterly regretting them afterwards, we now have a Prime Minister who – it became clear during this year – is prepared to act on the understanding that Britain's future lies in Europe.

Our democracy

IF THE renewal of democracy in the EU has yet to begin, Mr Blair made useful progress this year in reforming Britain's own dated constitution. His coup in forcing the Tory hereditary peers to roll over was a triumph of instinctive politics, knowing where to apply pressure and keep it applied. It was an important step, but a limited one – it is a strange reform of the hereditary principle that leaves an unmodernised monarchy. What is more, Roy Jenkins' report on electoral reform, less than two months after publication, seems to be gathering the very dust its author vowed would not be allowed to settle.

Our criticism of Paddy Ashdown has been that he has failed to promote liberal values aggressively, which is the only argument for plural politics worth having. Instead of playing footsie with Mr Blair in the hope of delivering an electoral system to the Liberal Democrats' advantage, he should have been voting against the illiberal Terrorism and Conspiracy Act passed in a dangerous parliamentary spasm after the Omagh bombing.

Mr Blair is devolving power to Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London, and yet he is an unconvincing pluralist. But when we accuse him of being a control freak, it is only an expression of our sympathetic concern for his self-interest. It does him no good to be trying to fix internal party elections or, worse, to impose a system of elec-

tions for the European parliament which will tend to strengthen party machines. And what possible purpose was served by preventing Labour MPs registering their protest against the bombing of Iraq?

Rule of international law

IF THE bombing of Iraq was the right thing to do, as we reluctantly accept it was, then it would not weaken Mr Blair's authority to allow Tony Benn – who conspicuously failed to offer any alternative means of restraining Saddam Hussein's murderous intentions – to vote against it. The US/British attack on Iraq has been an imperfect instrument of justice, but 1998 has never the less been a hopeful year in the development of international law against tyrants and war criminals.

The Nuremberg doctrine – that some crimes are so terrible that countries have the right to intrude on the sovereignty of others in order to bring perpetrators to justice – has been advanced significantly. The *ad hoc* courts set up at The Hague to try Bosnian war criminals could now be universalised in the form of the International Criminal Court, set up this year despite US opposition. If President Clinton had backed the court, his moral authority in Iraq would have been the greater.

The passivity and bluster of European leaders over Kosovo, the Serbian province still being "cleansed" of ethnic Albanians, has been one step back. But one step forward was taken by a heroic Spanish magistrate when he applied for General Pinochet's extradition. Like Woody Allen's Zelig, Mr Mandelson was there, too, opining that General Pinochet was a "brutal dictator" and that the idea of diplomatic immunity for him was "gut-wrenching". He was tactically unwise to show his feelings – but they were not the wrong feelings to have. More seriously, Lord Hoffmann was truly daft to overlook his connections with Amnesty International – but Amnesty's arguments were right, and it is to be hoped that they will prevail when the five new Law Lords come to deliver their verdicts next month. Anything which strengthens supra-national jurisdiction over crimes against humanity is right, even if its main effective sanction is only to exile retired dictators from Harrods.

Quality of life

THIS WAS also the year in which the Government first published an index of the "quality of life" in this country.

Anything that focuses on measures of national well-being, other than that of Gross Domestic Product, must be a good thing. But the Government has hardly begun to take those real "tough choices needed to secure our environment in trust for tomorrow", as Labour ringingly declared before the election.

Never the less, our impression of the past year is that the quality of life for most people in Britain might have, on balance, improved a little. To be sure, our lives are blighted unnecessarily by Chris Evans and the National Lottery. But, as a people, we are a little healthier, and the Government shows some sign of taking better schooling seriously – although it is far too prescriptive for the youngest children. We take a livelier than ever interest in the arts and the Internet: far from killing the book, has given it a new lease of life.

Nor has a better quality of life for the majority blinded us to our responsibilities to others. One of the best surprises of the year was the extraordinarily generous response from our readers to the appeal for the victims of the flooding caused by Hurricane Mitch in Honduras and Nicaragua. We have also been concerned about deprivation at home: we reported Sir Donald Acheson's findings of the persistent links between economic inequality and ill-health, and our Christmas appeal focused on the needs of one group in poverty in particular, namely the less fortunate among the old. As we promised in our first edition: "Our campaigning will emerge from our reporting rather than the other way round."

We hope to look back on 1998 as the year in which *The Independent*, having secured its financial future, regained the confidence of its founding spirit. This newspaper was created, above all, to serve its readers with "journalism of the highest standard", and we promised: "We will both praise and criticise without reference to the party line." We hope that that was as true over the past year as it was when the paper launched in 1986.

We also said something else to our readers in that first issue: "Your relationship with us will finally determine what sort of newspaper we are." Although we believe our values are still essentially the same, *The Independent* looks and feels very different from Issue No 1, largely in response to what you want us to be. We depend on an active, opinionated and independent readership to survive, and look forward to your support, brickbats and involvement in the year to come.

MONITOR

ALL THE NEWS OF THE WORLD

Peter Mandelson • The bombing of Iraq • Benjamin Netanyahu • Bill Clinton • Pan Am flight 103

THE BOMBING OF IRAQ

Opinions about the outcome of United States and British military action against Saddam Hussein

SING TAO
China

THE OPERATION Desert Fox assault against Iraq has not produced any meaningful results. The action failed to win support from other countries and has proved unable to shake Saddam's power. Instead, the attacks have united the people there and sparked anger in other Islamic countries. On the other hand, Peking has tackled this issue skilfully. It urged the US and Britain to end the military action and seek ways of continuing the weapons investigations through diplomatic channels. China has thereby struck a chord with many other countries around the world and has strengthened its diplomatic hand.

THE NEW YORK TIMES
US

THE CHALLENGE now for the Security Council is how to contain Iraq. Clinton has not ruled out future bombings, but this is no solution, and no one wants a permanent state of war. The Administration also wants to bring down the Iraqi government, but Saddam Hussein seems remarkably resilient and the opposition divided and weak.

What is required is some creative thinking, but the Security Council is polarized. Chances have to be taken, and perhaps now is the time to consider a provisional lifting of sanctions – not to reward Iraq but to provide an incentive for it to accept monitoring. Failure to comply would result in the reinstatement of sanctions. Through a combination of carrot and stick, it is possible that Iraq could be brought back to the community of nations.

GULF TIMES
UAE

BOMBING IRAQ was a mistake. To do so with so little consultation with other countries was a disaster: to do so without fresh authorisation from the United Nations Security Council was even worse. Britain must recover its balance, and start to question what is being done. If

Blair's government is so entranced by Clinton that it cannot ask the US Administration directly, then the British Opposition should start to ask questions of Blair.

JORDAN TIMES

THE ARAB world needs to get its act together by adopting a clear and coherent stance on the Iraqi situation in the aftermath of last week's bombardments of the country. The Lower House of Parliament in Jordan has taken due notice of the bold declarations and actions of Moscow, Peking and the Vatican on Iraq, and, rightly, lamented Arab inaction. This is as good an occasion as any for the major Arab capitals to co-ordinate their efforts with Paris, Moscow and Peking to return sanity and compassion to the conflict.

KOREA TIMES

THE STRIKES have done irreversible damage to the United Nations security council's effective mechanism to check Saddam Hussein's evil designs. By far the greatest loss is that the air strikes may have prompted a vast number of people in the Arab world to sympathise with the Saddam Hussein regime. Surely, a long-term psychological warfare campaign aimed at turning Iraqis against their ruthless dictator may be the most far-sighted option in terms of strategies to replace the present military action. President Clinton's Administration so foolishly embarked upon last week.

SYRIA TIMES

THE WHOLE world condemned this aggression on Iraq which was carried out to fulfil political objectives and personal ends. Hundreds of innocent Iraqi victims fell to satisfy President Bill Clinton's needs. He killed many civilians and destroyed many educational, economic and medical facilities. It is only part of the evidence of the criminal policy pursued by the only superpower in the world, run under the so-called "new order".

A Victorian morality tale

THE GUARDIAN

THIS WAS not Neil Hamilton or Tim Smith-style sleaze. Far from it. Our view remains that Peter Mandelson was guilty of vanity rather than venality and that since the source of his funding – a loan, not a gift – was from a ministerial colleague rather than an outside businessman, it hardly plumbs the depths of the Tory years.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

IN HIS farewell letter to Mr Mandelson, Mr Blair quoted his old friend as saying, "We can't be like the last lot." They are not like the last lot: they are far worse. Tory "sleaze" took almost 15 years in office to become a serious problem. New Labour has managed it in as many months.

THE MIRROR

THIS IS a defining moment in politics. Peter Mandelson exemplified everything New Labour stands for, and today he is ruined. The downfall of the Trade Secretary tells us many things, chief among them that politicians should not cut themselves off from the people. (Paul Routledge)

DAILY MAIL

MR BLAIR came to power promising an end to even the appearance of sleaze. Yet from the Formula One imbroglio to Geoffrey Robinson's labyrinthine financial affairs and Mr Mandelson's bizarre mortgage arrangements, that "purity" has often seemed less than pristine.

FINANCIAL TIMES

BORROWING MONEY – even a large sum – was nothing to be ashamed of. Allegations that Mandelson misled the press about the source of funds for his £475,000 house can be dismissed as pique. But as one who was in the vanguard of criticising Tory MPs for financial sleaze, he should have been super-sensitive to the need for a scrupulous adherence to pro-



PETER MANDELSON'S RESIGNATION

Verdicts on the career of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who resigned over a loan from a fellow minister

riety, especially after he joined the Cabinet in the summer reshuffle.

THE TIMES

IT HAS all the ingredients of a great Vic-

Dear reader, you can guess where their pride leads them. (Mary Ann Sieghart)

EVENING STANDARD

MANDELSON WILL now probably be low for a while. But supporters of Blair's vision of "New Labour" should hope that Mandelson will return soon, at least in an informal role. In Blair's 1994 leadership campaign, Mandelson played a vital background role, operating under the pseudonym "Bobby". We should not be surprised if he starts playing a similar role in the months ahead as Blair starts to map out his campaign to win the next general election, which may be little more than two years away. Nor should we be appalled. Despite his lapse of judgement, Mandelson is a powerful force for good. He will, and should, be back. (Peter Kellner)

THE SUN

IF THERE is one lesson from the case of Mandy's loan, it is this: honesty is not just the best policy. It is the only policy when you are in public life. And what does all this tell us about Tony Blair? We will never know if Mandelson resigned or was sacked. But one thing's sure. If Blair is strong enough to say goodbye to Mandelson, then nobody in government can rest easy.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL EUROPE
Brussels

IT IS instructive that what forced Mr Mandelson (and his friend Geoffrey Robinson) out of government yesterday was the mere appearance of impropriety. Indeed, anyone who finds Mr Clinton's impeachment hard to swallow ought to choke over the Mandelson affair.

Mr Mandelson's resignation may leave Tony Blair without a trusted ally and adviser in government, and it may give Labour's left new impetus to push an old agenda. But his resignation preserves the sense that this Government takes seriously its commitment to probity and accountability. Americans might profitably take note.

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU

Views on the record of the Israeli Prime Minister, who lost a vote of confidence in the Knesset this week

JERUSALEM POST
Israel

UNTIL the revolution wrought by Benjamin Netanyahu, it should be remembered, the peace debate was split between those who favored territorial compromise and those who believed that the Arab world would not make real peace, but only take advantage of Israeli concessions. That debate is now over: the argument is no longer over the principle of slicing the pie, only which party will negotiate a better and higher piece for Israel.

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE
US

IN THE Knesset, hard-line conservatives, nationalists and religious leaders were furious that he had signed a deal with Arafat granting territory to the Palestinians, even though Netanyahu has balked at implementing it. Knesset leftists



and moderates, seeking accommodation with the Palestinians, objected that the premier refused to carry out the Wye compact in good faith. Playing both sides against the middle and seeking centrist support, too, Netanyahu was caught in the crunch and lost the majority's confidence.

CANBERRA TIMES
Australia

NETANYAHU HAD no long-term vision or commitment to peace. He fumbled. He delayed. He en-

gaged the Americans in a cat-and-mouse game. He juggled the peace process, hoping to retain the support of the religious right. Domestically, too, he appeased them with funds for their special schools and special religious laws. Now he is exposed. Israelis and the Palestinians deserve a better Israeli prime minister – one committed to peace, not a chameleon who plays with a peace process in order to stay in power.

DENVER POST
US

IN HIS two-and-a-half years in power, Benjamin Netanyahu proved himself more of a pragmatist than an ideologue, but was unable to overcome the chronic instability of Israeli politics.

It is to be hoped that whoever forms the next government can attract a broad enough majority to build a solid foundation for a lasting peace.

THE TRIAL OF BILL CLINTON

The press considers whether the United States Senate should convict or censure the President

THE WASHINGTON POST
US

THE SENATE should censure him. He needs to be forced to acknowledge, as he has not thus far, not just what he did but why it matters – that lies of the sort he told under oath and otherwise raise a legitimate question as to the fitness of a president to serve. Censure is the least harmful of the imperfect alternatives, and the Senate should find a way to get to it.

THE STRAITS TIMES
Singapore

CLINTON HAS vowed to remain in the job. But once the trial gets under way he will find he has to divide his attention between the hearings and the goings-on in the rest of the world. No prize for guessing which of the two will require closer attention.

THE BOSTON GLOBE
US

THE OVERWHELMING majority of Republican senators will vote for conviction, so the president's fate rests in the hands of 45 Democrats. They must decide whether to condone or condemn. It is said that enough votes to convict Clinton cannot be found in the Senate chamber. Do not believe it. (John Ellis)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

EVEN NOW it is not too late for Mr Clinton to quit. Americans by and large increasingly feel that the episode has assumed the macabre overtones of a witch hunt and do not want to bear witness to Mr Clinton's impeachment; they would rather that he demit office on his own, thereby preserving at least a shred of dignity for a White House repainted in the primary colours of lies and lust.

PAN AM FLIGHT 103

Reflections on the tenth anniversary of the explosion of a passenger aircraft above Lockerbie

THE DAILY RECORD

TEN YEARS on, Lockerbie is again the reluctant focus for feelings and memories. Bitterness is only natural. Especially from the relatives who have received neither apology nor explanation for the failings which led to the deaths of their loved ones. And especially when, on the anniversary of their loss, Colonel Gaddafi resumes his cat-and-mouse game over the trial of the Libyan suspects.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

The behaviour of the US government in the Lockerbie case has not inspired confidence. The Justice Department has pursued a persecution campaign against those who have challenged the official version of events, especially those who subscribe to the view that the bombing was an Iranian-Syrian plot. Their claim is that Libya

had little or nothing to do with the case, but was made a scapegoat for political reasons. The best way to clear the air over this is to go through with the trial of the two Libyans. If prosecutors fail to establish guilt, the Syrian-Iranian angle will have to be reopened.

THE TIMES

We are still attempting to identify the perpetrators of that outrage, the worst single act of terrorism since the war. Or rather, we have decided instead to find a scapegoat. The two Libyan suspects are only bit-players, small cogs in a far larger terrorist machine. As the intelligence services of Britain, the US, and probably Israel, know full well, full responsibility for the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 lies elsewhere. Libya was not even the prime mover. If it had been, Colonel Gaddafi would not now be contemplating the risk of allowing two suspects out of his country.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK



"The way I see things is that at 50, your body guarantee runs out. At 60 you are into heavy maintenance and, at 65, injury time or worse." Shirley Conran, novelist

"This is a tremendously sad day for Hartlepool." Peter Barron, the editor of 'The Hartlepool Mail', reacting to the resignation of Peter Mandelson

"Consumer capitalism has eaten up the Church, the state, trade unions, extended families, everywhere that people learn morality." Irvine Welsh, novelist and playwright

"It's made the United States the laughing stock of the world and our political atmosphere entertaining, silly and sad." Woody Allen, film maker, on the President Clinton affair.

"I would hate the public to think that all MPs insist on having half a million pound houses." Diane Abbott, Labour MP

THE VIEWS OF THE WORLD

VERDENS GANG
NorwayBALTIMORE SUN
USTORONTO STAR
Canada

MISCELLANEOUS

Stories from around the world

ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS
US

MOOSE COULD die off in dramatic numbers this year if the snow continues or the weather warms. Roughly three feet of snow has fallen in the area since the beginning of December, but so far the snow is light and powdery, making travel for the moose relatively easy. If warm weather comes and a crust covers the snow, walking in search of food will become more difficult.

If more snow comes, the willows become covered and snow becomes scarce. If the snow gets deeper and someone wants to aid a struggling animal, packing a trail with a snow machine or snowshoes

will help moose save energy and get it on its way.

SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST

WHILE DOING an impersonation of Freddy Mercury in a bar, I was asked to desist. Apparently such an expression of gratitude to music was unlawful in Hong Kong as in the eyes of the constabulary it constituted "dancing". As the bar did not have a dancing permit, I was [encouraging] the management to permit it. All would have been well had I stayed rooted to the spot but my pathetic attempts at Freddy's body gestures crossed the line. What happened to the right to harmless self-entertainment?

RESEARCH BY SALLY CHATTERTON

THE SATURDAY ESSAY

There's no going back to the golden age of sport



RICHARD WILLIAMS

To talk about the good old days in a tone of nostalgic yearning is merely to waste valuable time

HERE IS the sports news. A leading tennis player has been fined after a positive result from a drugs test at Wimbledon. In Australia, two world-famous Test cricketers have been instructed to appear before an official inquiry looking into an illegal betting operation.

And that, on Radio 4's *Today* programme one morning this week, was that. No results, no overnight scores, no deeds of heroism or uncommon skill to arouse the reluctant spirits in a bleak mid-winter dawn. Just business as usual – the latest in a litany of sleaze, smear and scandal that has virtually submerged what is supposed to be the real business of sport throughout this year, with examples generated in practically every conceivable register and dimension.

An England footballer is hung in effigy outside an Essex pub. His manager writes a book betraying his players' confidences. The Tour de France, an institution watched by more spectators than any other live sporting event, is crippled by police investigations into systematic drug abuse. England's most successful rugby captain suddenly becomes a national hate figure, in belated revenge for his perceived arrogance. A German racing driver dashes along the pit lane intent on accusing a Scottish rival of trying to kill him and, apparently, looking for appropriate revenge. An Italian footballer pushes an English referee to the ground. A boxer who hit a chunk off his opponent's ear during a world title fight is allowed to resume his career of making millions for himself and even more millions for those who promote him. An Irish swimmer is finally found guilty of drug-taking after a wearisome protracted investigation, devaluing her three Olympic gold medals (pending appeal, inevitably). An English swimmer fails in her campaign to have her silver medal transmuted into gold by the removal from the records of an East German opponent now known to have abused illegal substances. A players' lock-out paralyses the professional basketball league in the US, which means that the game is wantonly withholding itself from the young fans whose addiction it has so assiduously and lucratively encouraged. Multinational corporations attempt to buy some of the world's oldest and most illustrious football clubs, their only interest in the game the profit it can generate.

But tennis? And cricket? Those white-clad games of summer, born in a world of sunlit garden parties, the traditional emphasis of which on good manners – the etiquette of the anguished "Sorry, partner" and the gruffly acknowledged "Good shot" – was woven into the conduct of the sport as firmly as the rules of play? Well, maybe tennis long ago forfeited its good name, thanks to the unpunished gamesmanship of Connors and the poisoned genius of McEnroe. And in cricket, although a warning shot was fired when the words "Marsh", "Lillee" and "bookmaker" appeared in the same sentence, perhaps it all went to hell in the instant it took Mike Atherton, England's longest-serving captain, to decide not to follow the tradition of walking when caught behind at Trent Bridge, and the fate of last summer's Test series turned favourably on his refusal.

No sensible observer can consider these events, and the overarching phenomenon that they represent, without sooner or later being drawn into raising the question of exactly what sport represents in our time, and what, in fact, it is



Riders in last summer's Tour de France staging a strike in protest at their treatment during the doping scandals that dogged the race Jacky Naegelen

for. Beyond, that is, its recently assumed function of ensuring the further enrichment of the owners of multinational communications networks and the manufacturers of £100 training shoes.

Almost anyone old enough to be a parent will remember a time when the answers were clear and threefold. Sport existed primarily for the benefit of the participants, to provide them with a vehicle for the development and exercise of certain special instincts and skills in a healthily competitive environment. Secondly, it existed to provide fun and excitement for spectators, offering an outlet for the human capacity for unreasonable loyalty and unreflective enthusiasm, additionally enriching the store of collective experience and shared memory. Finally, it provided young and unformed minds with a series of behavioural models: not just how to win and how to lose with symmetrical equanimity but how to oppose and how to collaborate, how to hold an advantage and how to recover from a setback, how to lead and how to follow.

All these lessons came under the heading of "Sporting Behaviour", but they were generally accepted to have a wider application in the development of individual character. And no matter how regularly or cynically they were flouted by professionals in the public eye, the principles stood unchallenged. Players and officials and spectators alike, everyone knew where he or she stood in relation to the underlying ethic.

But in recent years the position of sport in society has changed almost beyond recognition. As leisure time and disposable incomes have generally increased, sport has become part of the vast entertainment industry developed to service the demand for recreation. Sports stars, soap-opera actors and members of the royal family have assumed equal status in the new democracy promoted by the strategic synergy of television and newspaper interests. This exaggerated interest in private lives places the existence of prominent sports people in an entirely different (and, for some of its subjects, unendurable) perspective, creating an artificial appetite for news about the love life of a golf champion or the addiction of a gifted footballer. All the old attitudes – not least the nature of what might be called petty patriotism in contemporary life, as evi-

denced by the immoderate support for British tennis players at Wimbledon – have had to be re-adjusted to take account of this commercially induced shift in perception.

The earlier reference to parents was not accidental. To the surprise and dismay of many, that old belief in the character-forming function of games has been overtaken by another exemplary use of sport, embodied in the necessity to spend a high proportion of breakfast-time conversations explaining to children exactly why the two men who run English football are in disgrace, what it is that the man whose leg breaks we were copying in the park last summer is supposed to have done, why two women are allowed to put on gloves and punch each other for money and why the boy who goes out with a Spice Girl and whose poster is on your sister's wall is being treated as though he had committed high treason.

For some of us, this new experience began five years ago, with Eric Cantona's intemperate physical response to the verbal goading of Matthew Simmons on that notorious night at Selhurst Park. "Indefensible!" roared the headline the next morning in *LEquipe*, the daily sports newspaper of Cantona's home country. It was the obvious instant reaction to the player's assault on the fan, but even by the time the paper reached the news-stands it seemed less than adequate. Although Simmons had slandered Cantona's mother in terms that might have seemed barely exaggerated from the usual run of terrace insult, the Frenchman refused to turn a deaf ear. His dramatic lung fu kick stirred a fascinating and perhaps ultimately constructive debate about the extent to which Britain's small army of Simmons could be indulged before someone came to the conclusion that it was time to make an unmistakable gesture of disapproval.

This debate found its most important level at the breakfast table, where young attitudes were being shaped in the crucible of moral ambiguities. At the other end of a very specific and narrow spectrum from the Cantona incident, the product of Paolo Di Canio's utterly stupid assault on referee Paul Alocock was refreshingly unequivocal; in any imaginable circumstances, laying a hand on the ref is a bad thing and brings condign punishment.

Few people will have a problem with the question of drug use in sport. All bad, not

just in terms of fairness towards all contestants but in terms of the health of the abusers – mostly predicated on so-far unknown side-effects of products that have not been around long enough to undergo adequate testing programmes.

However, you would have to be hard of heart not to extend some degree of sympathy toward cyclists whose teams impose drug-based training regimes and who welcome the short-term reduction in sheer physical pain brought about by the various illicit injections and ingestions. From the saddle, bicycle racing is bitterly hard and unglamorous work, and its tradition of chemical assistance goes back to its very origins.

The same cannot be said for swimmers and athletes, victims of the steroid syndrome in the last quarter-century. But sympathy for those who take drugs merely in order to avoid having to give the rest of the field a 10-metre start, and who do so with the greatest reluctance, should not be allowed to obscure the unacceptability of their habit, even in a world where recreational drug use is a commonplace in every stratum of society.

Most of the incidents discussed so far would have been unlikely, if not effectively impossible, in previous generations. In most cases, the difference is created by the opportunity to make big money, usually from the proceeds of the sale of television rights or from its associated revenue streams, such as sponsorship or product endorsement. The staggering prosperity of top-level football appears to be the sporting equivalent of a victimless crime, despite the sterling efforts of the Newcastle United board to alienate virtually everyone in sight. But the wholesale takeover of rugby union by millionaires – including members of the Newcastle United board – has been a disaster, at least in the medium term; a formerly amateur game has been intoxicated by the illusion of prosperity, drunk on nothing more than the fumes from the next table.

As for individuals, no one who knows much about human nature would fall for a suggestion that well remunerated players will necessarily be more contented and therefore better behaved. In the vast majority of people, athletes and non-athletes alike, the most powerful effect of the sudden acquisition of large amounts of money is the strengthening of the desire

to acquire even more, with the consequent corrosive effect on such things as scruples. A secondary effect is the creeping assumption of superiority to the rest of mankind and a consequent exemption from its most basic rules (although this, as we have learnt from the front pages of this week's newspapers, is a phenomenon not wholly confined to the world of sport).

And yet, in a seeming paradox, this year also witnessed a piece of sporting behaviour as immaculately unselfish as anything within living memory. The fact that it took place during an international cricket match made it only slightly less surprising. By declaring an innings closed against Pakistan while his own score stood at 334 not out, the Australian captain, Mark Taylor, left himself tied with Don Bradman for the highest Test score made by an Aussie batsman, denying himself a solus position at the top of a list of numbers but winning a special place among the immortals for his refusal to claim a spurious statistical superiority to the greatest practitioner of his craft. Triumph and modesty went hand in hand; it was like being in a time-war.

But to talk about the good old days in a tone of nostalgic yearning is a waste of breath. We don't and can't live in them. We can learn from history, certainly, but we live in our own time, with its own kind of evolution, its own pressures and imperatives, and we should get on with confronting the reality of what that means. Rather than attempting to impose some idealised model drawn from an imperfectly remembered past, far better to invent a new set of responses in which imagination is blended with common sense. Hard to achieve, certainly, in the present overheated climate. But each discipline has its strengths and weaknesses, and its value in the developing market place. Players, owners and administrators need to apply realism to an assessment of their standing and to use that knowledge to create organic growth without running the kind of risk – that of total ignominy and potential obliteration – from which British rugby union clubs are struggling to extricate themselves. And to recreate a sense of ethics within that changing framework, to reimpose a sense of right and wrong that does not rely on the ever-fainter memory of Corinthian precepts, represents the biggest challenge in sport.

DAYS LIKE THESE

IAN IRVINE



26 DECEMBER 1932

JULIAN GREEN, novelist (pictured), writes in his diary:

"My wounded knee obliges me to lie on the drawing-room sofa most of the day. I read *Sense and Sensibility* before a big log fire. Delightful day! A feeling of deep security, very near to that peace that passes all understanding mentioned in the Bible. I put down my book, from time to time to watch the flames and smell the odour of the burning wood. Jane Austen's method consists in contrasting one moral quality with another – which quality she strives to personify – and although I find the method a trifle mechanical, I surrender to the charm of a writer whose smile is never a grimace and from whom emotion never draws a scream, for well-bred people don't scream. Jane Austen always remains a little within the bounds of what she wants to say, with the exquisite reserve that she alone possesses, but none the less her delineation is admirably clear. Compared with her, Charlotte Brontë seems wildly dishevelled."

26 DECEMBER 1918

SIR EVELYN WRENCH, diplomat, records in his diary:

"St Stephen's Day 1918 will long be remembered as one of the landmarks in the history of the English-speaking world. It was an historic moment when President Wilson, the successor of George Washington, stepped on to the platform of Charing Cross railway station to be greeted by His Majesty King George V, the lineal descendant of George III. As I watched the two men shake hands and noted the warmth with which they greeted each other, I felt that history was being made before my eyes. Two minutes later the King introduced Mr Lloyd George to the President, and all eyes were focussed on the two leaders of the English-speaking Democracies... All shades of political opinion on this side of the Atlantic were determined that the official head of the American Republic should receive such a welcome as was never before extended to any visitor to these shores. The cordiality and warmth of London's welcome to Mr Wilson will long be remembered by those who saw it. But the outstanding impression in my mind is the picture of that tall, smiling man talking animatedly to the little Welshman on the railway platform. These two men are between them very largely moulding the destinies of mankind at the Peace Conference. It is gratifying to know from their lips how identical are the aims of our two peoples and how close is the spirit of co-operation which exists between us. How fervently can we all re-echo the prayer of the King in his speech of welcome that the same brotherly spirit which has animated Great Britain and America in the war may inspire and guide their united efforts to secure for the world 'an ordered freedom and an enduring peace'."

ACCIDENTAL HEROES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

20: SANTA CLAUS



HE CAME, he gave and, as is traditional at this time of year, he was roundly abused for his pains.

Consider this. If someone were to dress up as, say, Mike Atherton or Tina Turner and rob a sub-post office, you would not find a headline reading: "Mike Atherton robs post office." At the very least the words "Mike Atherton" would be safely encased in quotation marks. Yet every year various unspeakable deeds committed by Santa Claus impersonators are reported in the newspapers as if perpetrated by the great man himself.

Only this week in Michigan, a scheme in which volunteers reply to letters that children have sent to Santa was sabotaged by a renegade

Father Christmas threatening in his reply to kill the child's pet dog. "I'll kill your dog – love Santa" was the newspaper headline. No quotation marks to be seen. Nor were there any in the story of the Santa snoring soundly in a department store grotto after lunching too well, nor in the one that crops up every year about the Santa who either mugs or exposes himself to a passer-by in Fifth Avenue.

Judging by the terrible press Santa Claus gets, you might suppose him to be a murderer or a game show host rather than a giver of gifts and a bringer of joy. It is not even as if he asked for the role – we imposed it on him. He heroically shouldered the burden and now finds himself the

unfortunate focus of our discontent when we are dissatisfied – as many of us were yesterday – with the baubles he has brought us. In the fourth century, of course, when Saint Nicholas was Archbishop of Myra, in Asia Minor, the consumer society was not quite as developed as it is today. Good deeds and saintly ways were his speciality rather than electronic games consoles with arcade-quality graphics.

News of his goodness spread across the Mediterranean to Holland, and the Dutch adopted Saint Nicholas, or "Sinterklaas", as the patron saint of Amsterdam. Every December the good 'saint' would bring the children of the city simple gifts from across the seas, exotic fruits such as oranges, unavailable in northern Europe.

It is not recorded how pleased the Dutch children were with their

edibles, but it is doubtful whether dissatisfaction levels were anywhere near as high as they were yesterday as we unwrapped our booty.

Students of capitalism will know, of course, that dissatisfaction is crucial in keeping the system going. If the stuff we acquired made us happy, we wouldn't desire any more stuff, and sheep might just as well safely graze on the sides of our wonderful out-of-town shopping malls. But Santa, bless him, has never read a word of Karl Marx and continues to bring his simple gifts of pullovers and questionable perfume in the heroically misguided belief that they will make us happy.

And how do we reward him? For most of the year, starting today, we

forget all about him. Then, next December, we start again with the bad jokes – "I don't care who you are, get those reindeer off my roof!" – the records that portray him as a cross between a child molester and the CIA – "He sees when you are sleeping, he knows if you're awake" – and the execrable movies in which, if he is lucky, he will find himself portrayed by Dudley Moore.

As if that were not enough for one person, saint or no saint, to bear, we top it all off by fuelling him on his annual mission with tooth-shortening, artery-clogging mince pies and the kind of sherry normally enjoyed at fresco wrapped in a sturdy brown paper bag. I tell you, if the guy were not such a hero, he would jack it in.

Louis Freedman

LOUIS FREEDMAN was a self-made property millionaire and the owner-breeder of the 1987 Derby winner Reference Point. A natural administrator who served on the Race Relations Board and numerous health authorities, he was also one of the country's most successful bloodstock breeders and was the last British owner to win the Derby.

It was his passion for the thoroughbred and the great success with which he ran his Cliveden Stud at Taplow in Berkshire that brought him into the public eye, though he was always at pains to stress that he was not keen on the publicity which surrounded the highly successful racehorse owner.

For a man who rose to somewhere near the top in almost everything he tried to do there was no outward hint of a ruthless streak. The genial Freedman retained a refreshing outlook on life and was particularly fond of humorous understatement. He was happy to chat about his horses and their chances - which inevitably he played down - and he clearly enjoyed his involvement in what started as a relaxation and turned into a success-driven breeding business. He rose through racing's corridors of power to become President of the Racehorse Owners' Association from 1972 to 1974 and Deputy Senior Steward of the Jockey Club between 1981 and 1983.

Educated at University College School in London, Freedman served in the Royal Artillery TA during the Second World War. In 1946 he set up Ravenscroft Properties, which was taken over by Land Securities plc in 1955. He was chairman of Land Securities between 1958 and 1977. It was during this period that he developed a hankering to own racehorses, which was his idea of a relaxing pastime to take him away from the stresses of business.

Freedman's boundless energy ensured that he pursued an active role in public life. This took him on to the Race Relations Board between 1968 and 1977, and he was appointed CBE in 1978 for his services to race relations. Once asked what a racehorse-owning property dealer was doing on the Race Relations Board, he replied: "Had it occurred to you that I might be interested in the dignity of mankind?"

In addition he was President of

the National Association of Property Owners; Special Trustee of St Bartholomew's Hospital in 1974; Vice-Chairman of the North East Thames Regional Health Authority, 1975-79; Chairman of the Camden and Islington Area Health Authority, 1979-82; and Chairman of City & Hackney Health Authority, 1982-84.

Freedman's first taste of success at the top level in racing was with a colt called I Say, who finished third behind the mighty Sea Bird II in the 1985 Derby and went on to win the following year's Coronation Cup.

On the advice of his great friend Peter Willett, who is acknowledged as one of the great authorities on bloodstock breeding, Freedman bought the fillies Lucyrowe and Seventh Bride. Lucyrowe carried all before her to win a string of top fillies' races including the Coronation Stakes, Sun Chariot Stakes and the Nassau Stakes, in which she beat Seventh Bride in a memorable finish.

In 1986 Freedman bought Cliveden Stud, which had been established back in 1906 by the second Viscount Astor, and started his own breeding operation. Two years later he purchased Beech House Stud in Newmarket from Lady Sassoon.

Atika Meli, whom he had ac-

'Had it occurred to you that I might be interested in the dignity of mankind?'

quired from the Sassoon bloodstock won the Yorkshire Oaks, Park Hill Stakes and the Princess Royal Stakes in 1972. Freedman's first Classic success came with his homebred filly Polygamy who won the 1974 Oaks and was a wonderful example of her owner's great flair for naming his horses, being by Reform out of Seventh Bride.

During that same year another filly, Mill's Bomb, carried the yellow and black silks with great success, winning the Lancashire Oaks, Nas-



Freedman, centre, after the Derby in 1987, which he won with Reference Point, ridden by the American jockey Steve Cauthen

sau Stakes and Park Hill Stakes. With his horses well to the fore Freedman decided to sell Beech House and concentrate his breeding interests at Cliveden.

By this time Henry Cecil had taken over the training of the Freedman horses from Peter Walwyn and in 1986 he produced Reference Point to run away with the William Hill Futurity, one of the top races confined to two-year-olds.

Freedman, something of a traditionalist, had harboured dreams of

winning the Triple Crown - the 2,000 Guineas, Derby and St Leger. In Reference Point he was convinced that if ever there was a modern-day Triple Crown winner he was it. Then in the spring of 1987 Reference Point contracted a serious sinus infection which precluded him from taking part in the Guineas.

But the colt was back in time to win York's Dante Stakes before leading all the way for a famous victory in the Derby under a masterful ride from the American jockey

Steve Cauthen. Reference Point went on to further glory in the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes at Ascot and duly won the St Leger.

The following year Freedman transferred the ownership of all his bloodstock to Cliveden Stud Company when his younger son Philip, a merchant banker and chairman of the Thoroughbred Breeders' Association, took over the reins of the operation. At the time he said that his breeding and bloodstock

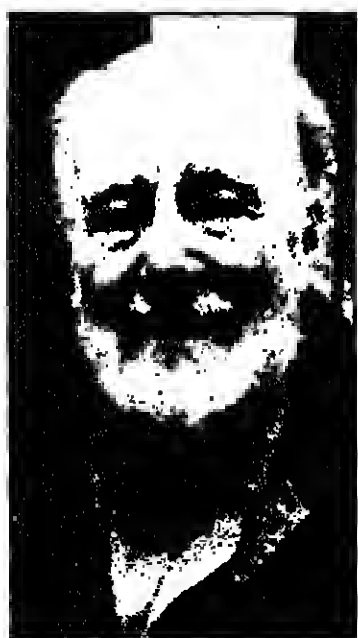
would benefit from being run by a younger man, though it transpired later that Freedman had become disillusioned after an article in *The People* newspaper earlier in 1988 had made allegations that he had been party to an illegal deal with Lester Piggott about the jockey's retainer.

Louis Freedman was so upset by the whole affair that he reduced his public involvement in racing. At the subsequent libel case with *The People* an out-of-court settlement was

agreed, with Freedman receiving substantial damages and costs which were believed to be in the region of £300,000.

TIM RICHARDS

Louis Freedman, property dealer and racehorse owner and breeder: born 5 February 1917; CBE 1978; married 1944 Cora Abrahamson (one son, one daughter; marriage dissolved), 1960 Valerie Clarke (one son); died Cliveden, Berkshire 21 December 1998.



Quiet interjections

PHILIP BARLOW moved into art and design education from the museum services in the early Sixties, at the time when the recommendations of the Coldstream Report on advanced courses in art and design were about to be implemented. One of the recommendations required that studies in history of art and complementary (academic) studies were to form a fundamental element of all courses.

In 1962 Barlow was appointed to be the first Head of the School established to provide these studies at Birmingham College of Art and Design - which in 1970 became Birmingham Polytechnic, and is now the University of Central England. For him it was a move that was to be immensely rewarding and which was

to occupy him in building up the school, its staffing and its work and eventually full-time courses, over the next 20 years.

To this work he brought a refreshingly different approach at the onset of this unique period of change in art education. No one could have been better qualified to introduce the new ideas necessary or to create the working relationships with staff in other departments essential for the success of these studies.

Gentle, likeable and with great understanding, he expanded the experience and perception of both students and staff through his influence. His particular teaching interests were in 19th-century French painting, Far Eastern art, the history of graphic design (the researched

19th-century illustrated magazines) and art since 1920. His ability to instil his love of learning in others was remarkable. He could propound and develop broad ideas in terms which were pitched with precision to develop students' understanding; while his quiet interjections solved many seemingly intractable problems during staff committee meetings.

Born in St Helens, Lancashire in 1924, Barlow read Philosophy at Birmingham University. His studies were interrupted by service in the Second World War, in which he was wounded. Completing the course after the war he obtained his degree in 1949 and took an academic diploma in History of Art in 1952 at the Courtauld Institute in London. He was briefly Assistant Keeper

of Art at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, and became Assistant Keeper of Art at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, in 1953, a post he held until his appointment to Birmingham College of Art and Design.

He was a member of the History of Art and Complementary Studies Subject Board and of the Creative and Performing Arts Board of the Council for National Academic Awards, and was a member of the Executive Committee of the Association of Art Historians and chairmen of the Art Education Group from 1973 to 1977.

Among his many publications were "Haydon and the Radicals" for the *Burlington Magazine* (1957); "Richard Wilson" for *The Connois-*

seur (1957); "Complementary Studies" for *Liberal Education* (1968); contributions to the *Oxford Junior Encyclopaedia* (passim, 1954 and 1964); *Catalogue of Oil Paintings*, National Museum of Wales (1954, with John Steegman); and exhibition catalogues for the Arts Council Welsh Office (*Dutch Genre Paintings*, 1956, *How Impressionism Began*, 1956, *British Art and the Modern Movement*, with Alan Bowness, 1962) and the National Museum of Wales (*Ideal and Classical Landscape*, 1960).

By the end of the 1970s the cares and stresses of departmental management at Birmingham proliferated, and beset him with problems which took him away frequently from his teaching. By now, too, he

was suffering from indifferent health and he retired early, in 1982. This enabled him to enjoy once again his academic pursuits and travel and, more particularly, his beloved garden, magnificently set high on the Lickey Hills. This he tended with the same loving care that he had devoted to his teaching and to his students.

PETER L. FIELD

Philip John Barlow, art historian: born St Helens, Lancashire 11 August 1924; Head of the School of History of Art and Complementary Studies, Birmingham College of Art and Design (later Birmingham Polytechnic) 1962-82; married 1951 Eve Young (one daughter); died Redditch, Worcestershire 21 November 1998.

GAZETTE

Announcements for

GAZETTE BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries. In memoriam) are charged at £8.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, funerals, forthcoming marriages, Marriages), which must be submitted in writing, are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; 1st Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Welsh Guards. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

BIRTHDAYS

TODAY: Mr Earle Brown, composer, 72; Mr Stephen Brown, ambassador to Korea, 53; Captain George Burnett, Lord-Lieutenant of Midlothian, 71; Professor Sir Colin Campbell, Vice-Chancellor, Nottingham University, 54; Sir Christopher Hewitson, former President of the Law Society, 69; Mr Rohan Kanhai, former West Indian cricketer, 68; Mr Eric Kinder, chairman, Smith and Nephew, 71; Professor Thea King, professor, Guildhall School of Music, 73; Miss Jane Lapointe, actress, 54; Mr David Perry, chairman, John Waddington, 61; Mr Denis Quilley, actor, 71; Mr Richard Skinner, disc jockey, 47.

TOMORROW: Mrs Irene Adams MP, 51; Mr Hugh Arbuthnot, former ambassador to Denmark, 62; Mrs Anne Armstrong, company director and former US ambassador to Britain, 71; Viscount Astor, former government minister, 47; Sir

Gordon Brunton, company chairman, 77; M Gerard Depardieu, actor, 50; Lord Griffiths of Forestfach, banking and finance authority, 57; Air Chief Marshal Sir Derek Hodgkinson, former Air Secretary, 81; Mr Mick Jones, rock musician, 37; Viscount Knutsford, former SW Regional Director, Barclays Bank, 72; Miss Pat Moss, former rally driver, 64; Professor Donald Northcote, plant biochemist, 77; Mr Mike Pender, rock singer, 56; Dr Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León, President of Mexico, 47; Sir William Purves, chairman, Midland Bank, 67; Mr Peter Quilley, rock musician, 65; Professor Brinley Rees, classical scholar, 78; Sir Norman Reid, former Director of the Tate Gallery, 83; Dr Edward Salthouse, Master, University College, Durham, 63; Lord Sterling of Plaistow, chairman, P & O, 64; Miss Janet Street-Porter, broadcaster, 52; Miss Polly Toynbee, journalist and broadcaster, 52; The Right Rev Michael Turnbull, Bishop of Durham, 63.

Even martyrdom is a family affair

FOR AS long as I can remember, Christmas Day and Boxing Day have been cosy days. In the little Yorkshire village where I was brought up the Methodist Chapel was the only place of worship, and in those days, in common with most such chapels, there was no service on Christmas Day. So there was not even the obligation of attending a service to drive us out of the family home. We ate together and afterwards sang carols in four-part harmony around the piano in the sitting room. My favourite carol, then as now, was "Christians Awake", by the 18th-century poet and hymnist John Byrom, whose final verse begins:

Then may we hope, the angelic hosts
To sing, redeemed, a glad triumphal song.

On these two days of the year the warmth of family excluded almost anything else.

It was while I was still at school that I began to wonder whether it was quite proper that as a Christian I should mark the Incarnation of the Son of God in such an indulgent sort of way. I read T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, where, in his Christmas Day sermon, the Archbishop talks about celebrating, in the Mass, the birth and death of Jesus on the same day. If this baby in Bethlehem was born to die, then perhaps Christmas was not the time to feel cosy after all. Of course, by the time Christmas Day and Boxing Day came round, such mid-year scruples were forgotten and I enjoyed the days as ever.

MEANINGS OF CHRISTMAS

BRUCE DEAKIN

The cosy nature of this season's celebrations is not some secular deviation from a true theology. For blood is a bond, as well as a price to be paid

The next serious challenge came from the radical preachers of the Sixties. They told us very strongly that there was nothing nice about the birth of Jesus. The child was born out of wedlock, no one wanted the hapless parents, the manger was a stinking hole round the back and the shepherds were a rotten bunch of outcasts, that is, if you believed any of it anyway. Perhaps the proper way to celebrate Christmas was in sackcloth and ashes, not in the comfort of a family party.

Even so, there seemed no reason, as a teenager, to have any qualms about the indulgence on Boxing Day however. There was nothing religious about that to disturb my equilibrium. Until, that is, I took an interest in Lectonaries and discovered that Boxing Day is the Feast of St Stephen. What perverse thinking could have led those early Christians to celebrate the

stoning of the first Christian martyr the day after celebrating the birth of his Lord? Stephen had been brought before the Sanhedrin on a trumped-up charge of speaking against Moses and against God. He does his cause little good by accusing the authorities of being "stubborn, with heathen hearts, and deaf to God's message". Then, to cap it all, he tells the Council, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right-hand side of God." In their anger they proceed to hutch him by stoning.

Initially I supposed that the placing of the celebration of St Stephen's Day the day after Christmas was a historical coincidence. But, of course, this is not the case. The commemoration of the death of the first martyr is not a sort of minor Good Friday which the lectionary has slotted into a conveniently quiet day. And its emphasis is not on the "suffering" of martyrdom. It is true that the prayer of the dying Stephen, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them", echoes the prayer of Jesus upon the Cross but the emphasis of today's liturgy is of that vision of Stephen's and his prayer, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." This is the celebration of one who arrived at the ultimate home wearing the martyr's crown and who rests welcomed in his divine Father's arms. Compare this with the interweaving of salvation and rejoicing in that Byrom carol and one sees a clear link between Christmas and the feast of St Stephen. The Christian apologists, who emphasise the harsh, even cruel, side to

the Bethlehem story, have not got it wrong. It is about God struggling to find a place in a harsh world that has little time or space for Him. But at the end of the day the baby did find warmth, comfort and a family to support him, otherwise he would never have survived. Which is why it is, indeed, a fitting tradition to mark Christmas Day with a family celebration.

St Stephen's Day celebrates a final family reunion, the martyred Stephen with God the Father and his risen Lord. Christmas Day and Boxing Day, the Birth of our Lord and the garlanding (stephanos) of the first martyr, are family days. To say this is not a theological conceit. As anyone who, at this time of year, is involved in ministering to the elderly will tell you, the greatest, perhaps the only, joy which the season brings to many lonely people is the treasured memories of Christmases gone by, cheered by the recollection of loved ones now dead. The only thing that many have to look forward to is that final family feast of which St Stephen's Day speaks. Just as the Eucharist is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet and a sacrament on the way to it, so our Christmas Day and Boxing Day indulgence may yet prove to be a foretaste of a greater family reunion.

For many, and certainly for me, knowing that is a help and comfort on the way.

The Rev Bruce Deakin is a Methodist minister in Haydock, Merseyside

Loch, stalk and smoking barrels



George Coyne: 'We're not trying to stop people coming into the hills. But deer can be an estate's survival. If we don't have a herd, I might not have a job'

Colin McPherson

Hillwalkers and red-deer stalkers are clashing on the estates of the Scottish Highlands. By Stephen Goodwin

Two rifle shots rupture the blustery sound of a stiff breeze through dead grasses. Three hours of hunched stalking, crawling and lying flat on cold, boggy ground come to an end. Emma Paterson has bagged her first red deer of the hind season, an eight-year-old "yeld", without a calf this year, and a scrawny youngster of a few months that George, the stalker, thinks would not have lasted the winter.

It was not exactly a day of glorious sport in the imagined Victorian tradition; more a demonstration of an all-weather rural skill, like sheepherding. Mrs Paterson, 46, did not leap up exultant, though she took a quiet satisfaction in achieving two clean kills at a range of about 120 yards while having a newspaper reporter and photographer just over her shoulder.

For a few minutes after the shots we barely moved. George Coyne, 55, stalker on the 18,000-acre Auchlyne estate in Glen Dochart for the past 25 years, was anxious we keep low so the rest of the herd, only hesitantly moving away, would not as-

sociate the lethal shots with human figures on the skyline.

"If anybody says we're cruel, they don't know what they're talking about," George said, with a degree of repressed anger at what he feels is a general misunderstanding of the ways of sporting estates. "It was a wee thing and would have died a lingering death when the weather turned cold. We did it a mercy."

Bouncing back across the boggy lower slopes in the eight-wheel drive Argo - an all-terrain huggy - with the two carcasses between the seats, he gestured at the bleak hillside and asked what, besides sheep and shooting, is it good for? It is a question various interested, and often opposing groups have been turning over in recent months and one that will come into sharper focus when Scotland gets its own parliament. The fate of George Coyne, archetypal stalker in his light brown tweeds and eponymous hat, may be bound up in its answer.

The Edinburgh parliament will have several emotive rural issues high on its agenda when it begins work next summer - setting up national parks for Loch Lomond and

parts of the Highlands, a right to roam over the hills, and land reform, giving communities a bigger say in how the estates which dominate their lives are managed. All the strands are linked and landowners fear they are about to be "got at". They probably are. The parliament will want to demonstrate early vigour. Striking at the preserves of aristocrats and nouveau-riche landowners sounds radical while not being much of a drain on scarce public funds. Inevitably most MSPs (Members of the Scottish Parliament) will be from urban areas, yet even urban Scots hark back to some mythical "Heilan' Hame" and regard estate owners as direct descendants of the perpetrators of the Clearances. Some are.

With reform staring them in the face, the lairds have become remarkably amenable. The Scottish Landowners' Federation has signed up to a proposal that the parliament "should introduce a right of access to land and water, exercised responsibly for informal recreation and passage". This would enshrine in law a liberty held dear by hillwalkers and climbers but occasionally

disputed by landowners with a fondness for intimidatory warning notices about high-velocity rifles. National parks are no longer anathema, and landowners seem content to relinquish archaic feudal rights over tenancies.

Auchlyne estate will watch developments with interest. Bought from the Earls of Breadalbane in the 1880s by Emma's great-great-grandfather with a fortune founded on Crabbie's ginger wine, it straddles Glen Dochart, from the flanks of shapely Stob Binnein (1165m) and Ben More (1174m) on the south side, to Sgiath Chull (919m) on the north. All three hills are significant to George Coyne, as each is over 3,000ft high and therefore a target of "Munro"-bagging hillwalkers. Emma owns the north side of the estate and acts as "ghillie" - labourer and carcass collector - when George is stalking with a client. Her mother, Judy Bowser, owns the south and runs the home farm. But cattle, sheep and modest grouse shooting and stalking cannot keep the family in the splendour to which it grew accustomed in its heyday of ginger wine and whisky receipts.

To keep things the way they are, Mr Coyne and his employers are keen to strike an accord with hillwalkers and amend the public view that estate owners have let the red deer population explode to provide easy stalking.

There are 350,000 red deer in Scotland and numbers are still rising. In its recent annual report, the Deer Commission hints at using its statutory powers to intervene directly and shoot deer if peer pressure among landowners does not boost the hind cull. To George, this language smacks of Scottish Natural Heritage, the Government's distrusted environment adviser. "SNH wants to cover the whole country in bloody trees," he grumbled.

Over-grazing by red deer has stopped natural regeneration of Scots pines on the slopes of the Cairngorms, where SNH would like to see the recreation of the ancient forest of Caledon. When the National Trust acquired the 75,000-acre Mar Lodge estate on the southern Cairngorms it began a massive five-year cull, aiming to cut the herds from 3,000 to 1,650 by the millennium. "I wouldn't say we are struggling, but

we are having to work hard at it from dawn to after dusk," said Stewart Cumming, who heads a team of four stalkers. Auchlyne, like much of the west of Scotland, is in better balance, though with mild winters, enabling deer to graze high on the hills and weaker animals to survive, numbers have to be checked. Forty-seven stags were shot on the estate in the autumn and George is hoping for a total of about 70 hinds this season (21 October to 15 February). Thirty-seven have been shot so far, whenever possible with fee-paying clients. Mainly English farmers and middle-class professionals, they pay £100 for a day's hind stalking.

Hillwalkers can be a curse to stalkers. The "Munroist" may be oblivious to the cluster of deer in the next hollow, and the stalk of several hours it has taken the hunters to approach them. But the instant a happy wanderer breathes the ridge, the deer take off. Uncomfortably for the landowners, there is no doubt who is more important to the Highland economy. Stalking brings in £5m a year and supports 350 jobs. Venison sales are worth another £5m.

In contrast, hillwalkers and

mountaineers contribute about £150m and help support literally thousands of jobs. Auchlyne is a leader in the "Hill Phones" scheme, providing information to walkers on where stalking is taking place. Emma is the co-ordinator for estates in Glen Dochart and Glen Lochay.

"We are not trying to stop people coming into the hills," said George, who has given up stalking in one popular corner. "But they need to realise the effect it could have on somebody's employment. Deer can be an estate's survival. If we don't have a herd, I might not have a job here."

Coexistence has become the order of the day for the lairds and their employees, though not all yet heed it. In the van, George Coyne and his friend Stewart Cumming over at Mar Lodge, are having to marry conservation and access to the hills with an attitude and way of life on the sporting estates that has barely changed since Queen Victoria roamed Balmoral with John Brown. Maybe the eyebrow-raising friendship of monarch and ghillie is a lesson: surprising accommodations are possible.

Six grandparents and one happy family

Divorce needn't kill off the family Christmas. You just get more relatives. By Jack O'Sullivan



Carmen, Matthew and Aaron decorate their Christmas tree Keith Dobney

AT FIRST sight Aaron Middleditch's Boxing Day seems no different from that of any other six-year-old. His grandparents will arrive, laden with presents, to spend the day at his home in Essex. But while death has robbed some contemporaries of a granddad or a grandma, Aaron has the full quota plus a few to spare - in fact, six grandparents will be there.

This is a very modern tale of what happens when relationships break down. For years Aaron and his mother, Carmen, spent Christmas with her mum. Carmeo had been abandoned by her partner when she became pregnant, but her story has a happy ending, and this year she married Matthew Middleditch.

The extended family united today is the result of that union. Aaron will see Matthew's parents, his adoptive grandparents, John and Susan Middleditch. Since the wedding in August, they have already started a savings account for Aaron's 21st birthday. He is their only grandchild and they have made a huge fuss of him - although the idea of a "ready-made" grandson took a little getting used to.

"Normally you have time to prepare," says John, a 53-year-old army officer. "But I was dealt a fast compatriot. At first we didn't even know the kind of toys he

liked. It takes a while for two old fogies like us to get on the same wavelength."

But by today, they will have made the transition. They have already had Aaron to stay at their Hampshire home, building a gingerbread house together. Today they will be bringing a duvet set and Lego.

"Dad will be down on the carpet for hours building Lego like he was with me and my brother," says Matthew, 25, also an army officer. Carmen is also delighted: "Whereas I spend 10 or 15 minutes with Aaron on some activity and then get on with something else, they will spend a whole afternoon playing with him."

Carmen's parents are also dropping by. Gloria, who runs a sheltered housing scheme, and Roland, but here things get even more complicated. Carmen's parents divorced 15 years ago, so both are bringing their new partners. Gloria, from Enfield, in north London, will be with John, who worked for BT until he retired. Roland, from nearby Walthamstow, is a manager in a local factory and will bring his new wife, Larain, an office manager.

Understandably it hasn't always been easy. "When they split up, it was awkward," says Carmen. "But now mum and dad are really happy. They all get on really well. I have four siblings, so mum and dad are

often together for family events. And their new partners get on well. And all the parents on my side get on well with Matthew's parents. They are the same age group and like to talk about the Sixties, miniskirts and stuff like that. My mum had one of those peroxide beehives in those days. They also chat about the army - Mum was in the army when she had me."

So that's Aaron's six grandparents. But hang on, there's another complication. Carmen, like Aaron, has acquired a new father. Although Roland has always been "dad" to her, he is not her natural father. "My mother split up from my natural father when I was eight," she says. "We didn't see him again. Then my mum married Roland and they had a child, Corinne, who will also be here on Boxing Day. I've never thought of her in that way - just as if Matthew and I had another child, he or she would just be a brother or a sister to Aaron."

So there will be absentees from Carmen and Matthew's open house today - Carmen's natural father and Aaron's natural father. But Aaron is not complaining. He may have six grandparents, only one of whom, Gloria, is a blood relative, but he has three granddads in Matthew, John and Roland who could not be more enthusiastic and committed. The same is true of the women in his life.

All of which brings us back to the new nuclear family which was created around him when Carmen and Matthew got married. You can tell on meeting them this is a wonderful love match, albeit one that has overcome a few obstacles. For a start, there is a difference in age between 35-year-old Carmen and 36-year-old Matthew.

And you might not immediately have teamed Matthew, public school and county, with Carmen, a single mum raising Aaron on a secretary's salary. And those differences have not been completely vanquished - Aaron got football boots for Christmas, so Matthew's desire to introduce him to rugby must wait.

For Carmen and Matthew, today's open house is a way to bring everyone together while offending nobody. Carmen plans to bring out their wedding photographs to look over the amazing year that has changed so many lives.

On the day they were married, Aaron was christened in the Hampshire church where Matthew had been christened. And Aaron came with them on their honeymoon.

"This year's Christmas holiday will make everything complete," says Carmen. "This is everything I ever really wanted."

From Havana, trailing sparks

Carlos Acosta once thought ballet was for sissies. Not any more. Just watch him fly. By Nadine Meisner

Winter in London seems colder when you were raised in Cuba and have spent the last five years of your career in the soupy bayou climate of Houston, Texas. In fact, Carlos Acosta seems to be having difficulty adjusting, not only to our weather, but also to the Royal Ballet. Still, he knows it is early days. He will probably feel better once he plants his feet on the Royal Festival Hall stage and takes on his first major role, as Colas in Ashton's *La Fille Mal Gardée*.

To an outsider, he looks the antithesis of British drizzle. He evokes sunshine and pleasure with his grammatically relaxed, consonant-sounding Hispanic English, his sudden gleeful laughter as he describes an enthralled visit to the V&A, his warm brown skin. He is that rarity: a black ballet dancer, one of only two (with Jerry Douglas) in the Royal Ballet. Where modern dance has hotly attracted and accepted all human shades, ballet—middle-class and rarefied—has deterred black children, and ballet companies have failed to welcome black dancers.

New ballet is tentatively trying to become colour-blind, and in an art form where talent—especially male talent—is scarce, directors can discover the advantage of enlarging their pool of choices. Acosta, who joined this season, is a real star for a company that has become more a collection of black holes than a galaxy of heavenly bodies.

We wait to see how well he will suit the gentle filigree of Ashton's *Fille*, although he has briefly dipped into Ashton before, with a secondary part in English National Ballet's *Romeo and Juliet*. But, during the Royal Ballet's October-November programmes at Sadler's Wells, he astonished audiences in *Raymonda Act III*, partnering the exquisite Miyako Yoshida.



Carlos Acosta: 'Here you are on your own. If you want to work, it's fine. If you don't, it's up to you'

Emma Boom

They saw a dancer who slashes across space faster than anyone else, who lacerates the air with shapes so clear and sharp they seem to throw off sparks. He is no mere step-trickster, either: his Russian-derived Cuban training has given him elegance and subtlety.

In a country other than Cuba, where the population is racially mixed and vocational dance training is free, all the odds would have been against him. Born 25 years ago in a poor district of Havana, he was the youngest of 11 children, a kid with excess energy who played football, break-danced on the street, and stole fruit. But his father, a truck

driver, had a neighbour whose two sons were at ballet school. He realised that such an establishment would not only curb his nine-year-old son's hyperactivity, but would also educate and feed him.

"So he enrolled me," Acosta says. "And, of course, I started to have problems because I thought ballet was sissy. I skipped the classes and exams, and when I was 13 they fired me." His persevering father found another ballet school, where he could become a boarder this time and the teachers could keep a closer watch on him. And soon afterwards, Acosta had his first sight of the superlative National

Ballet of Cuba. Proud of his own physicality, he was awe-struck by the dancers' honed athleticism and determined to be like them.

At the National Ballet School of Cuba he won four competitions, including the prestigious Lausanne and Paris contests. He joined English National Ballet for the 1991-2 season, but his stint was cut short by a bone spur in his ankle. After an operation, he became a member of the Cuban Ballet, guested with the Houston Ballet and eventually transferred there permanently.

Houston, one of the US's leading companies, gave him widely varied roles. American audiences and crit-

ics went wild about him; Houston's director, the choreographer Ben Stevenson, encouraged and finetuned him.

Dancers may be grateful disciples, but they are also greedy prowlers, scanning the horizon for fresh challenges. Acosta's eyes alighted on the Royal Ballet in Houston, talking in a buzzy snarl he had been full of excitement about his move, which included his girlfriend Tiekka Schofield, another Houston principal, who has opted for a freelance career. In London, at the Royal Ballet School, sitting in a maths classroom grimly crammed with empty desks, he seems anxious

—as well he may be. Since arriving, he has been glad to learn new roles; it is what he came for. But just three—*Raymonda*, *Fille* and a supporting part in Forsythe's *In the Middle, Somewhat Elevated*—a total of 11 performances in three months, is hardly a crushing schedule. "I didn't expect the special treatment I had in Houston," he says. "But I came to London to dance, and I've not had much so far."

He realises things may improve and is impressed by the company's large selection of teachers, each with a different input. But he misses Ben Stevenson's unifying presence. Stevenson is the Houston Ballet, a father guiding and driving his close-knit family, while the Royal Ballet is a looser, more international and grown-up ensemble. "In Houston everybody had to be in class every day and Ben would show you how he wanted things, how to improve. Here you are on your own. If you want to work, it's fine; if you don't, it's up to you."

"It's OK for me; I know how to get on with things. But it could be difficult sometimes, because if you do something wrong, it's much more hard for you to realise than for other people watching. I still have a lot to learn—I don't want to be the same dancer five years from now. I would like to have different tools and to find nourishment through as many roles as possible."

Like all dancers, he is preternaturally aware of the clock ticking. He has—what?—10 or 12 years left? He has arrived at the Royal Ballet in turbulent times. Perhaps the company's recent flamboyant male defections will bring him more performances. If the Royal Ballet, in this New Labour era, are to be a People's Ballet, they would be crazy not to capitalise on the politically and artistically impeccable presence they now have in their midst. *La Fille mal gardée* opens at the Royal Festival Hall on 29 Jan.

Pirates are all at sea

SAVOY OPERA

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE
THE QUEEN'S THEATRE
LONDON

A SHABBY makeshift pelmet hangs over the stage of the Queen's Theatre, photographs of Gilbert and Sullivan ignominiously displayed in crumpled papier mâché frames. So much for the preservation of our national treasures. Snubbed by the Arts Council of England, the future of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company—self-proclaimed guardians of the G&S tradition—has been in doubt. Questions have been asked in the House. Which is why the people's champion, Raymond Gubbay, has ridden to the rescue.

So how come this tatty seasonal revival of *The Pirates of Penzance* looks and behaves as if it's arrived about a century too late? How come extinction suddenly seems like a better bet than preservation? Is this the shapelessness of things to come, or one final reminder that the financial situation is indeed desperate?

Gubbay knows better than to serve up something as obviously penny-pinching as this to a West-End audience. For *mise-en-scène* read miserly *en-scène*. Roger Kirk is credited as designer, but scenery like this isn't designed, it's discarded. Act Two is indeed "a draughty old ruin", but of what? The 1886 production of *Ruddigore*, as seen from behind?

Now, I love every last syllable and semi-quaver of the Savoy operas and it pains me to see them dragged out of hock in this way. You have two choices when mounting G&S today: either you preserve absolutely the style, texts, and traditions—in which case only the superlative will do—or you find ways (as witness the marvellous *Miller Miskadee* at ENO) of sharpening up the ironies for a modern audience. Stuart Maunders' production manages neither. Rather, he recycles every cliché, every bad sight gag, in the dog-eared D'Oyly Carte manual. How funny the kneebends of the constabulary could have been, if only the gag had been better choreographed. There were too many more where that came from.

The company were full of good intentions, though Jill Pert's Ruth and Richard Stuart's Major-General should have been better. As Mabel, Anna-Clare Monk's soubrette was pretty enough, while Christopher Saunders gave us a sweetly sung Frederic. Their Act Two duet was the musical highlight of the evening—by which time our ears had adjusted to the somewhat weedy, though well deployed, nine-piece orchestra.

Biggest laugh of the evening: "With all our heart, we love our House of Peers." Not for much longer. Be warned, D'Oyly Carte. EDWARD SECKER

THE YEAR IN RADIO

ROBERT HANKS



barrage of anecdotes and interviews.

Most depressing of all has been Radio 4, where the cleaning out of the old schedules—a worthy

ambition in itself—was accompanied by a ludicrous new commissioning system and an extraordinarily wasteful attitude to talent and knowledge.

Not everything this system has produced has been bad—looking through the files, I realise I never proclaimed publicly that *King Shupid* was a brilliant panel game. Against that, though, you have to set the mindlessness of *Only Connect* and *I'm Glad You Asked Me That*. And surely

no serial drama has been as relentlessly dreary as *Under One Roof*: no phone-in as pointless or disorganised as *Vag Talk*.

Even the best things have sometimes had their disheartening side: no original radio drama has had one quarter the impact of Conor McPherson's *The Weir* or David Hare's monologue, *Via Dolorosa*, which both transferred from the West End to Radio 3.

Towards the end of this year there have been signs

of a change for the better—notably the appointment of Roger Wright as controller of Radio 3. But it has been an anxious year; one that has shown the BBC running scared of audiences and governments, and by and large, unwilling to play anything but safe.

So farewell to 1998; and for me, farewell to writing about radio. As of the new year I'll be on the back page, turning square-eyed in front of the television set.

THE NAME of Theodore Sturgeon is unfamiliar to most people—a few will remember him as the author of the classic saga of man versus malign machine, *Killdozer*—but in the late Fifties he formulated one of the most important intellectual principles of this century. Defending science fiction against its detractors, he admitted that 90 per cent of the genre was crap. But, he pointed out, "90 per cent of everything is crap". This

worrying truth has sometimes been called Sturgeon's Law; and it is something reviewers and readers of reviews should always bear in mind.

When you come to make your list of the highs and lows of the radio year, the lows, naturally, will vastly outnumber the highs. Excellence is hard to achieve: mediocrity and idiocy come cheap. So what?

But, slice it anywhere you like, this does seem to have been a particularly bad year

for radio. Radio 1, having briefly enjoyed the most creative line-up for years, succumbed to a bad attack of the ratings collywubblers, shot Kershaw off to the wee small hours and signed Zoe Ball as its headline act.

Similarly, Talk Radio experimented briefly with a slightly more intellectually challenging approach before Kelvin MacKenzie took over and propelled it into a new hokishness. Radio 3's daytime schedules saw music in full retreat from a

The fairy tale comes true

HERE'S ANOTHER *Nutcracker* arrived for Christmas, and a jolly good one too. Every production has Tchaikovsky's music as its starting-point and greatest asset, but this one, by Birmingham Royal Ballet, has the benefit of the Royal Ballet Sinfonia in the orchestra pit with Barry Wordsworth to conduct them, and you might be surprised what a difference that makes.

Advantage number two: there is not a gimmick in sight, unless you count the conjuring tricks interspersed throughout the action, and I reckon they are a bonus to Peter Wright's beautifully straightforward staging. He makes more sense of the simple story than most producers, and even keeps emotional interest going through the generally plotless second half by letting the heroine, Clara, take part in almost all the dances.

There is real choreography, too, the kind where the steps make attractive and meaningful patterns that relate to each other and to the music. Not to mention bold and apt designs by John Macfarlane.

Having just completed a successful run in its Birmingham home, the company arrives in London to show how apt the Lyceum is for ballet, even though it has not been used as such since 1931. To move about within the building proves complex, and redecoration has been done too much on the cheap, but the stage looks good. Are the Covent Garden companies

DANCE

THE NUTCRACKER
BIRMINGHAM ROYAL
BALLET
LYCEUM, LONDON

kicking themselves for rejecting it as a temporary home? BRB, widely thought the best ballet company in Britain now, offers a multiplicity of casts during its three-week London season. For an idea of its present strength, I hope you watched its alternative production, *The Nutcracker Sweeties* (to the jazz adaptation of Tchaikovsky by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn) on BBC2 yesterday afternoon.

The liveliness and zest these dancers brought to television is equally apparent on stage in the real *Nutcracker*. Sandra Madgwick took the lead on opening night as the most adorable, fresh and vivacious Clara I can imagine. As the Sugar Plum Fairy, Sabrina Lenzi had a brief but very pretty entry at the ballet's end, dancing her duet and solo with lovely assured line and a radiant smile.

Joseph Cipolla brought charm and perfect timing to the magician Drosselmeyer, and others who stood out were Timothy Cross as Clara's dancing partner Robert Parker as a bounding Jack-in-the-Box, and the four delicious Mirliton girls. But this is a company strong from top to bottom, worth seeing whoever is dancing.

JOHN PERCIVAL

NEXT WEEKEND IN THE REVIEW



Magnus Mills joins
'The Independent'
The Booker Prize nominee begins
his new radio column on next
Saturday's Arts page

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'A Nor'Easter bang on Christmas Day and the in-laws are comin for dinner. First time in thirty years they're gonna sit at my table. They figure that at forty-five I'm mature enough to handle the responsibility'

W e get these blizzards in New England. Four feet of snow, 20 below zero plus the wind-chill factor. Arctic air that freezes the inside of your nose so it hurts to breathe, and your face feels like it's in a plaster cast.

Nineteen eighty-seven's a doozy. A Nor'Easter bang on Christmas Day and the in-laws are comin for dinner. First time in 30 years they're gonna sit at my table. They figure at 45 I'm mature enough to handle the responsibility. And I'm a grandmother for Christ's sake.

There's Crowley's Uncle Frank and Frank's sisters Lizzie and Sadie, plus Minnie, Sadie's best friend. The Aunts live with Lizzie's husband Pat in a big old house in Portsmouth. I tease Pat about his hair-ern. Three pint-sized women who went into the factories at 13 and came out at 65, which explains their take on life. That and the Catholic Church. Minnie's a little cutie but deaf as a post. She and Sadie shared an apartment then moved into Lizzie's house to save money.

Lizzie's a lot nicer since she went crazy. Like a giggly little girl; loves everyone and laughs at everything... Don't care if she doesn't know what day it is. Sadie's a spinster, real religious and a pain in the butt. She's kept her sanity all right. Remembers everything you want like hell to forget.

Well that's the Aunts and there's poor Pat tryin to stay out the way of their dust mops. He's a sweetheart, always been my pal. Never held my little Ricky against me like them other prudes.

Pat's no beauty, bless his heart, with that big bald head and four missing teeth and one leg shorter'n the other so's he has to wear a black boot with a humungus four inch heel. Had to leave the police force because of it, but he got what he called a "position" as attendant at the public conveniences on Washington Street.

He's always settin in his arm chair, the orthopedic boot crossed over the good foot, chilling out with a fat cigar and blowin smoke the length of the parlor. He keeps real clear of the "Mutterin Zone" where the women say their rosaries while they watch the news and soaps and quizshows. They all sing along with the commercials which is kinda sweet, but that mutterin drives Pat bananas. And no more cigars since the cancer. Crowley hardly talks to him except about ball games. No generosity of spirit. But it ain't all his fault.

ANYWAYS, HERE I am. It's 11:30 Christmas morning and the dinner's steamin and bubblin in the dream kitchen I waited 13 years for. Crowley's in a grump shovelin out the driveway. Snow's blowin sideways, oearly horizontal, and that's a real bad sign.

Brrrrrr. The telephone goes. "That you, Gerry?"

"Well hi there Sadie. Merry Christmas."

"We ain't comin."

"What?"

"Have you looked outside?"

"Course I looked."

"You seen that snow?"

"I seen it."

"Well Pat ain't drivin in that stuff. His stomach's not too good this mornin anyways."

Pat's got a apparatus, which is what you're supposed to call a colostomy bag these days.

"But what'll you guys eat?"

"We got a loaf of bread and some cream of mushroom soup. You watch the mass from the Vatican this mornin?" "Yes," I lied.

"Wasn't it grand? Just beautiful."

"Sadie, I got all this food here."

"Well we ain't riskin our lives."

"Yeah, but..." "Merry Christmas."

I try real hard to love Sadie, but sometimes I'd like to wring her chicken neck.

Enter my husband, covered in white and stompin his big ugly boots all over the carpet.

"Hey Crowley!" I yell.

"What's matter now?"

"I just vacuumed that."

"Christ, it's only water."

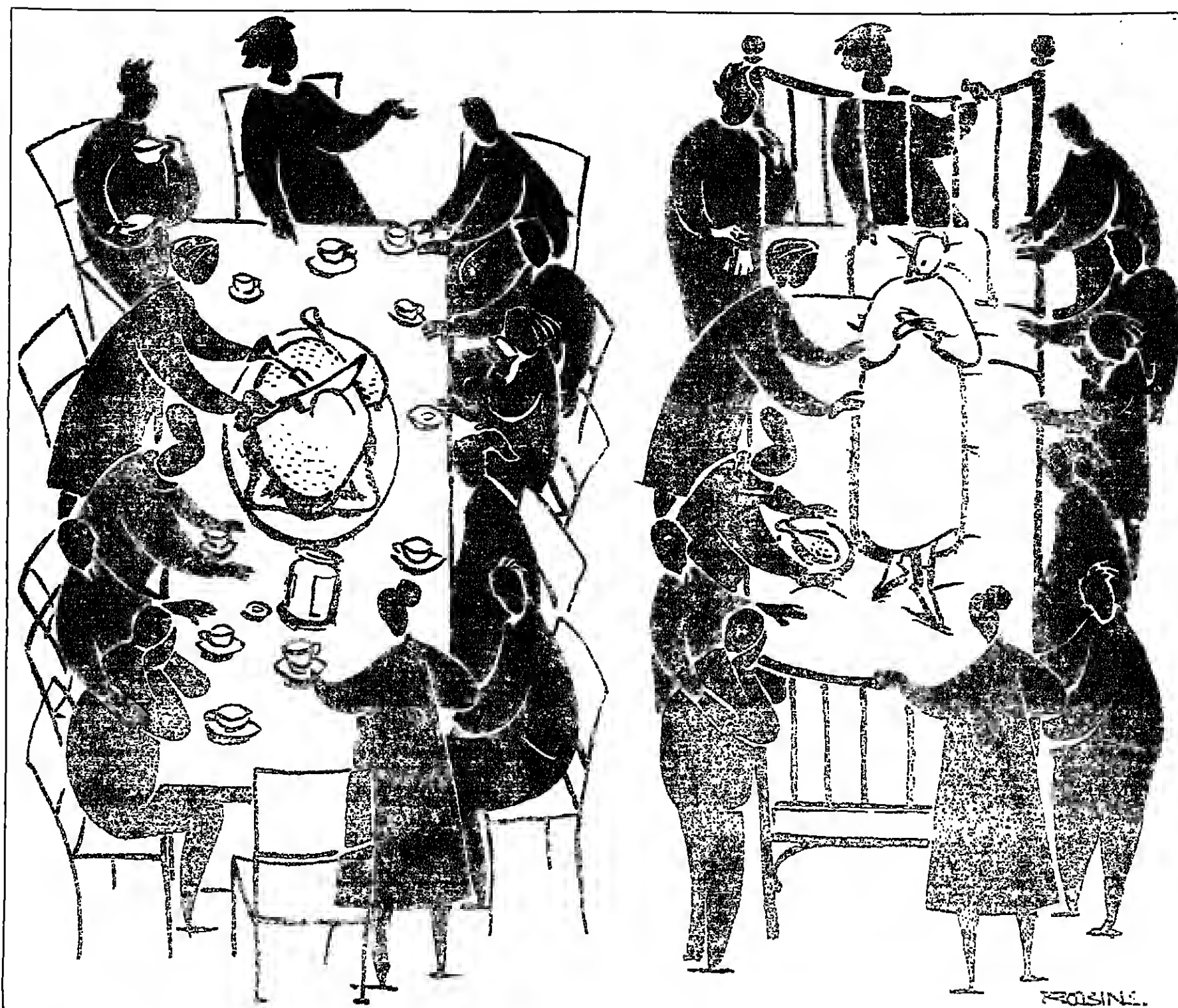
"It is not. There's all mud in it. Look."

"Can it Geraldine."

I tell him Portsmouth ain't comin. It don't improve his mood none, and he locks himself in the bedroom and listens to old Dylan records. Michael Emmet Crowley cannot handle rejection. Well, he's a poor orphan

Turkey on White

A NEW SHORT STORY BY MARY FLANAGAN



boy who don't know who his real Daddy was and that's a tough one. Never shows much gratitude to Lizzie and Pat, though they raised him like he was their own instead of the fatherless babe of their distant cousin who died of TB. They doted on their Mikey. Suckers for them blue eyes and brown curls, sayin he looked like the Christ Child. "The Light of the World", ho, ho, ho. Well there ain't many curls now and he's weighin in at 230.

I CALL Frank case he ain't comin neither. "Don't you worry, Ger. we'll give you a hand with that turkey."

He's pretty cheerful considerin Nora died last June, poor little bird, and Frank ain't cut out to be a widower. Won't eat. Won't socialise. And Moira's in New York most the time. So I'm admirin my 20 pound turkey and feelin kinda proud. Thought I'd try something different this year, maybe along Tex-Mex lines. I like to experiment. Keeps me young. I found this recipe for hamburger stuffin in *Family Circle* and sorta improvised. (Crowley'll moan about the chillies, but that's too bad.) I used Worcestershire sauce, I mean a lot. Then on an impulse I added sugar, only the bowl slipped outa my hand, so I balanced out the sweetness with some vinegar and that was better. I poured in a can of tomato soup, but the mixture looked awful loose, not like Nora's or Lizzie's.

Well, I won't tell you what it reminded me of. But I says to myself no regrets, Geraldine, and went on merrily rammin it into the cavity. In the end it looked pretty good. Only wish Nora could see it. She never thought I had the equipment.

She looked down on me a little cause I come from a measley old farm upstate and talk like a hick and got pregnant at 15. Oh yeah, they all blamed me not Crowley. But Nora was a lady. Always good to me and the kids. She was a tad jealous cause I had five and she only produced Moira, which is why Moira's spoiled like Crowley, but she's a good kid really. Likes me. Thinks I'm a riot and a half, and that burned her mother up as well. I was a little too down to earth for Nora.

'The snow's still blowin ... Face it guys, we're stuck here for the night with a turkey, a corpse and a loony tune'

WELL, IT'S two o'clock and we're all settin round the table, Frank and Moira, Kevin, my second, Kathy, my third, and Kelly my ten-year-old baby. Then comes my big moment and I bring on the turkey. (It was all red around the bones, so I covered it up with some mashed turnips, only the red's showin through now, but that don't matter much.) Conversation ain't exactly lively cep't for Moira and me, but it improves with Crowley's red wine. Can't stand the stuff myself. Tastes like wet ashes.

I notice people ain't exactly tuckin into the food like they normally do. Frank's hardly touched his, but I put it down to a bad Nora day. I keep askin if they want seconds and no one does, so I help myself. Tastes pretty good to me. What's the matter with everybody?

Brrrrrr. Telephone. Crowley answers. Sadie wants to speak to her brother. "Are you sure about this

Sadie?" Frank don't sound too pleased.

Everyone's listenin, tense like we're waitin for an H Bomb to hit. "Well check again. Yuh, I'll wait... Hi there Lizzie. And a Happy Christmas to you too. Yuh... yuh. Mikey's eaten all his dinner. Oookay. Merry Christmas, Sweetheart... Sadie? Well? Okay we'll be right down. Course I got snow treads. Get em every year, first of November. You know that."

He hangs up. I can hear him

road and I grab the wheel and he pulls himself together.

"Crowley, this is gettin hairy." "I'll drive Dad," says my Kevin in the back seat with Kelly and the turkey. "The hell you will."

When we get to Lizzie's house I'm shakin like a leaf, part from the cold, part from the drive and part cause I'm spooked out by corpses.

Inside the heatin's at 82 degrees and the TV's blatin out carols. The girls are at the kitchen table sayin their rosaries.

"He is?" "You seen him Lizzie."

"Well why didn't nobody tell me? Pat! Pat!" She's off up the stairs two at a time with the box of chocolates. Frank's right behind her, then Moira.

My Kelly's eyes are like saucers. "Jeeze. Ma. Old People."

Crowley's real morose. Probably wants a beer, but Sadie keeps a dry house. Course he's not liftin a finger to help poor Frank who's in charge whether he wants to be or not. Just sits there like a big helpless kid. And the rest of us ain't much better. Shock, I guess. Sadie's makin coffee as usual. No wonder them three are so damned wired.

I ask does anyone want some turkey, but no one's interested.

"Pat liked turkey sandwiches on white bread," Minnie pipes up.

"With lots of mayonnaise," Sadie corrects her like she done for 50 years.

"He liked cranberry relish too." I puts in my two cents.

"Not on turkey sandwiches!" Sadie acts like I called him a child molester.

"He liked his turkey," says Min in a little sing-song voice. "And he liked his relish."

"Yes, but not on sandwiches, Minnie." "What, dear?"

Think I'm better off upstairs with the deceased than down here in Wonderland. I pull myself together and climb the creepy stairs. I can hear Moira soundin pretty stressed-out.

"Please, Aunt Lizzie, don't do that. No, no, stop it, please."

I'm standin in the bedroom doorway and oh boy there's poor Pat gone to the last roundup, wearing his orthopedic boot and a white undershirt with purple suspenders. Lizzie's bendin over holdin his eyelids open and Moira's behind tryin to drag her

off. Frank's on the phone to the undertaker who's passed out in front of *Indiana Jones*. Lizzie's yellin into Pat's face. "Speak to me, Pat," over and over. Then she starts mutterin into her Missal. Moira closes Pat's eyes.

Outside the snow's swirlin around the streetlights and cars look like hibernatin polar bears. There's that weird quiet you only get in snow storms. Meanwhile Lizzie's at Pat's eyes again. "Wake up, Pat. It's time to go home."

"Please, Aunt Lizzie. He's dead."

Then Lizzie's fiddlin with the curtains, sayin she's gonna shorten em two inches. Moira closes her uncle's eyes, cep't Lizzie only opens em again and Moira starts crying. The situation's pretty hopeless, then suddenly Frank gets hold of the undertaker. My heart's poundin so's it hurts when I kiss Pat goodbye.

WELL, WE'RE all back at the kitchen table waitin for the undertaker and starin at that miserabel lookin turkey carcass. Nobody's talkin cep't Lizzie who keeps askin do we want sandwiches, coffee, a Coke, a chocolate, a warm sweater, then goes off the parlor and comes back.

"Pat, come watch the ice skating."

"Pat's dead, Lizzie," Sadie bollers.

"You seen him upstairs lyin on the bed?"

"I did? Was he takin a nap?"

"No he wasn't, he was dead. God took him."

"Where'd he take him?"

"To heaven, Elizabeth." She just ain't gonna lay off. She thinks if she just keeps on badgerin Lizzie the poor little hild'll remember. Which makes me wonder who's the crazy around here.

"Hey Sadie," says Crowley, "cool it." "Yeah, give her a break," Frank agrees.

Sadie's lookin pretty desperate. "But she's gotta understand."

"She won't never understand."

"Then God help us."

Everything's real quiet cep't for the snowplough goin past, and I thinks what the hell and starts pickin at the turkey and next thing I know Frank's at it too then Minnie and my kids and Crowley and even Sadie. Lizzie yanks off a leg and takes it up to Pat cause he ain't eaten nothin since breakfast. Sadie puts her face in her hands.

The snow's still blowin. It's level with the window ledge now. Face it, guys, we're stuck here for the night with a turkey, a corpse and a loony tune. But hey, there's a knock at the door and it's Tom the undertaker. Sadie jumps up. "Come on in, Tom. Merry Christmas. You gonna have some turkey with us?"

"I won't say no, Sadie. I'm awful sorry about Pat."

Sadie gets out the Wonderbread and the large economy size Hellman's, and what do you know, we're all makin sandwiches. Tom says he'll have some coffee, so everyone has coffee and pretty soon we're tellin stories about deaths and wakes and funerals, and some of them are pretty funny and even Sadie laughs a couple times. "You know, Gerry," she says, "this is real good turkey."

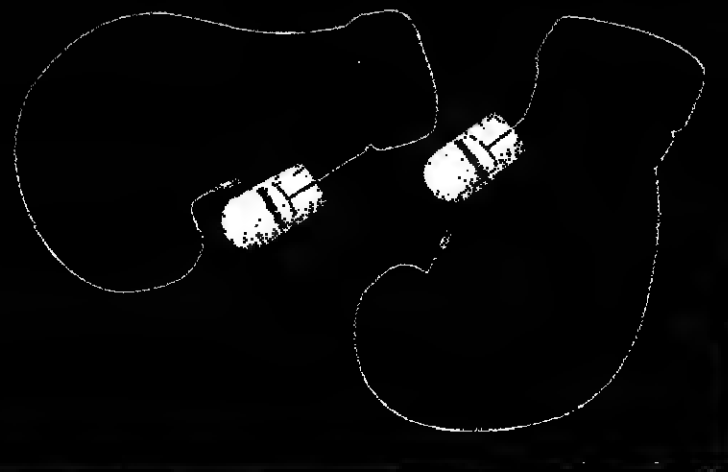
IT'S THE day of the funeral and the sun's shinin bright and cold. Father Roach is mutterin over the grave and Lizzie's starin at the casket and I think maybe just for a minute she knows she's a widow. Crowley's starin at it too, thinkin maybe about the other grave, the one he was so gung-ho to find, only now he understands Pat was more his father all along, so he'll be stewin in his own juice over that for a while.

They're only pretendin to bury Pat cause the ground's too frozen hard to dig, so he'll have to stay in the mausoleum til April. Don't like the thought of him stacked up with all the other unburies. I'll sure rest easier when he's six feet under. He had a good death spite of the rum-pus he caused. God love him. An easy death for a good man. There's some justice anyways.

Mary Flanagan's latest novel is *Adèle* (Bloomsbury, £5.99)

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COUNTRY & GARDEN

By heavens, when do you plant?

Should you sow by the light of the moon or plan according to the rhythms of the sun? Anna Pavord gazes skyward, intrigued

I tidied the duster box recently. Don't ask me why. I can only think that it was a way of putting off the more gruesome tasks that took me to the duster box in the first place: blackleading the grates, cleaning the brass. But as a symbol of the transitoriness of things, nothing could be more potent.

Take Shaky. There was a time when one of the children's bedrooms was a shrine to the pop star Shakin' Stevens. In the duster box was an embarrassing proof of her obsession: half of a red sweatshirt, with "Shaky" emblazoned on the front. She must have been very young at the time (at least, that will be her excuse) because it is a very small sweatshirt.

The remnant of a hideously shaming dress was my own. Well, the Seventies were weird, but were they really this weird? And yet this dress, with its brilliant, psychedelic swirls of shocking pink, magenta and orange, was once the star of my wardrobe. Now it was one of the few rags in the box that actually looked better encrusted with Brasso than it did in its original state.

There is nothing more transitory than fashion. That is the point of it, that it moves on all the time. Clothes and pop stars are more at its mercy than gardens, though there have been some high-spirited attempts to subjugate gardening to the cause. The difficulty is that gardens won't stay where they are put. This is a nightmare for stylists. The only way out is to get rid of anything that grows, and spread crushed car windscreens where the grass should be. Crushed car windscreen is the gravel of the Nineties.

Transitoriness provides excitement and freshness in a garden. Sometimes it is a style thing, a craze for a certain colour, such as the brilliant blue that is in vogue in gardens at the moment. There are styles in plants. Hostas used to be stylish, but aren't any more. Hellebores are certainly stylish. So are certain sorts of primroses. Daffodils have never yet made the leap.

There is an inbuilt transitoriness in gardens, too, created by the ebb and flow of seasonal plants. Jasmine and viburnum have taken over from the summer's roses. New views open up as leaves fall from the trees. And each year gardeners introduce different plants into the garden picture, some of them perhaps never intended as permanent fixtures. Marigolds, for instance, flowered spectacularly among the beetroots in our vegetable garden this year. I enjoyed that sh, w, but it is more fun to plan a different performance there next year than to repeat the old one.

But underpinning these fleeting effects in a garden is a foundation of enormous strength and stability. The resilience and timelessness of gardens, the slow growth of trees, the immutable change of autumn into winter and winter into spring,



the consequence those changes have on plants – no one can garden and remain unaware of these. Indeed, they may be why we took to gardening in the first place.

Tapping into this underlying strength is one of the things that makes gardening important to me. This, of course, is not a conscious feeling. When I wander out through the back door to do some casual weeding I do not say, "Fancy that. I am part of the great diurnal round." I just get on with the job in hand. But while you are there, gazing at the silhouette of the mahonia in the dusk and the sun sets, bleeding across the sky with the savage intensity that only happens on winter afternoons, you feel a lot better than you do inside. Colder, but better.

I don't feel I have to burrow around in my subconscious for reasons to garden. Fortunately, nobody else seems to feel the need either. Psychologists and psychiatrists leave us alone with our happy mania. My own theory about this (you have to have a theory in the psych-business) is that the act of gardening itself is what keeps you out of the hands of the shrinks.

For some gardeners, the greater scheme itself becomes all-important. Instead of underpinning the calming chores of pruning and sowing and harvesting, it becomes the driving force of everything they do in the garden. Over Christmas, I puzzled over *Gwydion's Planting Guide* by J.R. Gower, which describes itself as "the definitive moon-planting man-

ual". The guiding principle is not difficult to grasp. Root vegetables should be sown, planted or transplanted in a period that starts two days before a full moon and ends three days before the following new moon. All other fruits and vegetables should be sown, planted or transplanted in a slot that starts two days before a new moon and ends three days before the following full moon.

Now, you don't necessarily have to go along with these rules (which have long been a part of gardening lore), but at least you can understand them. J.R. Gower adds a further complication: signs of the zodiac. The beneficial signs for sowing and planting are Taurus, Cancer, Virgo, Scorpio, Capricorn and Pisces, all either earth or water

signs. The trick, says Gower, is to get the phases of the moon working properly with the movements of the zodiac.

That means, according to the example he gives, that tomatoes should be sown between 14 January (22.04 hrs) and 17 (8.42 hrs) or 19 January (21.22 hrs) and 22 (9.35 hrs). I enjoy the thought of J.R. standing with seed packet in hand, waiting, when most of us are thinking about bed, for the hand of his watch to creep round to the 04 position.

Nick Kollerstrom's *Planting by the Moon* is a much fuller and better designed guide to the same subject, though still wonderfully arcane. There is a generous day-to-day diary in this book, with full instructions on the state of play up there in

the heavens. On 5 January, "The Moon has reached its north node, which is usually a stressful time, but is quickly followed by the trine aspect, which is more harmonious. Work only in the afternoon." Oh! if only I could. Afternoons are so wonderfully short in January. But, dear Mr Kollerstrom, afternoon-only hours just aren't an option. Will a thunderbolt strike me if I dig compost before noon?

I do hope not, because I am intrigued (though not persuaded) by this book. It tells about cycles of the sky, and how the moon may affect fertility and crop yield. It explains the rhythms of the sun and sets out sensible principles of organic gardening. It includes a modern-day plan of work for a productive kitchen gar-

den, which appears alongside its 18th-century equivalent, garden notes taken from Martha Bradley's *The British Housewife*, which was first published in 1756. "December is a dead season of the year for gardening," says the sensible Mrs Bradley. That's all the excuse I need to stay by the fire.

Gwydion's Planting Guide is written and published by J.R. Gower (£3.75). It is available from the author at 11 Summerhouse, Orchard Cottages, Bove Town, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8JA. You can also buy the book from Counter Culture at BCM Inspire, London WC1N 3XX, (01823 698895). *Planting by the Moon*, by Nick Kollerstrom, published by Prospect Books, £9.99

The merry nuns of Gloucestershire

YOU MIGHT imagine that Christmas in a nunnery would be a low-key affair. But I am prepared to bet that yesterday's celebrations in the Convent of Poor Clares at Woodchester, near Stroud, were as merry as any in the land. Of course, I did not take part, for the convent is a closed order, and outsiders are not admitted to its inner sanctum; but a briefing from the Mother Abbess, Sister Mary Anthony, earlier in the week, left me in no doubt about her community's high spirits.

Our talk took place in the guest parlour, and for an hour the small, plain room rang with peals of laughter as she and Sister Mary Therese, in their black veils and dark-brown habits, described their life. Most of their time is spent in silence, because this is their way of "being with God". There is normally no conversation at meals, during which one of the company reads – from the scriptures, from the martyrology, from a book of travel or education.

So what were they planning for Christmas? The festival began with an early midnight Mass, starting at 8pm on Christmas Eve, to which parishioners were invited. According to the Mother Abbess, these outsiders always pack into the external chapel, which is registered for public worship, separate from the nuns' chapel, and "sing their hearts out".

On ordinary mornings the nuns get up at 5am and prostrate themselves on the wooden floors of their cells, renewing the dedication of their lives to God. But on Christmas Day they had a lie-in until 7am. Then came the Office of Readings and morning prayer, another Mass at 8.30am, then midday prayer, then Christmas lunch. And what did they eat? "Turkey and Christmas pud-

COUNTRY MATTERS

DUFF
HART-DAVIS

ding, of course!" And wine? "Oh yes." The turkey had been given by "good people", relations of a sister long deceased, and the wine by another benefactor. Not that any of the nuns over-indulged: having no suitable glasses, they drank from tiny china cups, which they believe are of Flemish origin.

In the afternoon they said the Rosary together, at 4.15pm had Vespers, and in the evening held a party in a big room upstairs, decorated with pretty papers and candles. Two sisters in fancy dress brought in the accumulated presents, some delivered by well-wishers, others brought practical gifts like wool or writing paper bought by the nuns themselves.

They also – treat of treats – had television. Although the convent sports an aerial, the nuns have no television set, but at Christmas and Easter they borrow one and watch carefully chosen programmes, together with any videos (also given) that are deemed suitable.

Their order, named after Saint Clare of Assisi, was founded on the

Continent in 1621, when the Catholic religion was still banned in England, and the epithet "poor" reflects their determination to follow the frugal existence led by their mentor, Saint Francis. The convent at Woodchester was built in the 1860s; at its zenith, after the Second World War, it housed 30 nuns, but now the community is down to 13, and the average age is high. The Mother Abbess has been there for 52 years, and her ac reader, Sister Frances Agnes, is 89.

The building – in Gothic style, and finely built of Cotswold stone – is a formidable size, stretching for more than 100 yards along the side of a steep valley. Eight acres of land go with it; when the community was larger and younger, the sisters kept cows, which gave them their own milk and butter. Until a fox killed the lot, they had chickens, and, until last summer, bees: Sister Frances Agnes, the resident apiarist, was dismayed when she found that her colony had flown away. She is still a dab hand at growing artichokes, and most of the sisters lend a hand in the vegetable garden and orchard.

Their main work, and principal source of income, is the production of altar breads, which they sell not only in the diocese but as far afield as the Channel Islands and Germany. The ingredients – flour and water – could not be simpler, but to achieve the right texture demands skill and experience.

The dough comes out of the bakery in sheets, which have to be damped before they can be cut by machine. The pieces are then sorted, counted and packed in purpose-made boxes, before being wrapped, addressed and stamped, all by hand. Many of the orders are large – Swindon's is for 8,000 a month, and



The main source of income for the sisters is the production of altar breads Margaret Lister

double that at Christmas and Easter – and the sisters' annual output is about five million pieces, which earns them £25,000 a year.

As the Mother Abbess merely admits, "We don't pay any wages." So that income goes a good distance. But the nuns are not allowed to hold any capital, and for major repairs to the building, or large improvements such as a new boiler to heat the chapel, they survive on gifts or

legacies. "We depend on divine providence," she says. "It sounds extraordinary, but when we really need something, the Lord does provide." Every six weeks she and the cook go off in a borrowed van to the cash-and-carry in Stroud, to stock up with essential food (they eat meat twice a week, and fish once). But otherwise the nuns rarely venture into the outside world, except to visit the sick.

This does not mean they are out of touch with world events. "That dreadful bombing of Iraq!" exclaimed the Mother Abbess with a shudder. "Saddam's so awful to his own family and his people. I'm praying for his conversion."

Even a short time spent in her company was extraordinarily cheering. I had expected to find faith and dedication, but not such high spirits, not half such a sense of fun.

NATURE NOTES

HOLLY HAS for centuries been credited with the power of warding off evil: the reason, no doubt, for its close association with Christmas. A versatile evergreen, it sheds surplus foliage in summer, and during the winter its berries provide valuable food for birds – which is why, by this time of year, most of them have usually disappeared. Browsing animals relish its dark-green, shiny leaves, their needle-like points notwithstanding.

Every winter in the New Forest hollies are pollarded – cut off short, so that they will shoot again – to provide fodder for the semi-wild ponies. So well trained are the horses that they gather from far and wide the moment they hear power-saws start up.

In the old days a decoction of holly leaves was used as a cure for chilblains, and birdlime was made from the bark: holed down, it would end up as a thick, gluey paste, which could be spread on branches so that birds' feet stuck in it when they landed. Today the hard, white wood is much sought after by turners: when polished up, it takes on the texture almost of ivory. Young, straight stems make excellent walking sticks. Like yew, hollies can live for several hundred years.

DUFF HART-DAVIS

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SCOTLAND

Aberdeen - 3 January: Aberdeen City 11am, Hazlehead Park CP 6mils.
Ayrshire (South) - 27 December: Troon 10am, Railway Station (west side), 8mils (01292 314573). Troon 9.30am, North shore CP adjacent to swimming baths, 9mils (01563 850406).
Maidens 10am, CP Maidens Beach, 6mils (01505 502977).
East Lothian - 27 December: Dalkeith 9.30am, Indoor bowling club CP 7mils (0131 663335).
Musselburgh 1pm, Mall Avenue CP 5mils (0131 6633549).
Edinburgh - 27 December: Edinburgh 9.30am, Hillend lower CP 9mils (0131 334 5868).
Fife - 27 December: St Andrews 1.30pm, Petherum CP 4mils (01334 657573). Leslie 10am, Holl Reservoir off A911 between Leslie and Auchmearbridge, 8mils (01592 873297). Thornton 10am, Lomond Centre CP 4mils (01592 773146).
Glasgow - 27 December: Glasgow 10am, Bunhouse Rd, nr Kelvin Hall, 9mils (0141 4290893).
Moray - 26 December: Elgin 10am, Elgin Cathedral, 5mils (01542 886134).
Perth & Kinross - 1 Jan: Dunkeld 11am, North CP 6mils (01350 727708). 2 January: Alyth 10am, Square, 6mils (01828 632263).
Stirling - 28 December: Blairlogie 10am, Linden Avenue CP, 5mils (01259 742306).
Tayside - 27 December: Kinross 10.30am, Sunnyside CP 3mils (01383 722843).
Kirkcubright 11am, Den CP, 5mils (01382 623052).
West Lothian 29 December: Livingston 10am, North Railway Station, 7mils (01506 814093). 3 Jan: Linlithgow 9.30am, Station, 9mils (01698 881761). 4 Jan: Castlegate 11am, Mercat Cross, 5mils.

WALES

Carmarthenshire - 26 December: Llandovery 11am, CP 4mils (01550 721699). 27 December: Newcastle Emlyn 11am, market CP (football field end), 5mils (01239 711057). Lampeter 1pm, picnic tables, Taffol, Cwmam, 4mils (01570 422181).
Denbighshire - 26 December: Llandudno 10.30am, CP, 4mils (01558 822960). 1 January: Llanelli 11am, Bridgion Inn PH CP, Llangennech, 8mils (01554 752980). Llandybie 10.15am, Red Lion CP 4.5mils (01550 777623).
Ceredigion - 26 December: Aberystwyth 2pm, Bryn Rd, nr Welsh Books Centre, 4mils (01970 612012). 1 January: Silian 1pm, Rookery CP 5mils (01423 422369).
Conwy - 20 December: Betws y Coed 10am, Railway Station CP 8mils (01248 430651). 27 December: Betws y Coed 10.30am, Railway station, 5mils (01745 824611).
Glamorgan - 26 December: Barry 10.30am, Portkerry Church, 5mils (01446 734661). 27 December: Penarth 11am, Clifftop CP 5mils (01223 705530).
Gwent - 26 December: Pontypool 9.30am, Old Station CP on A4043, Pontnewynydd, 8mils (01495 772109). 29 December: Abergavenny 10am, Foxhunter, 2pm, Blencroft off B4246, N of Blaenau, 10mils (01495 774895).
Gwynedd - 27 December: Dolgellau 11am, Ganolwylf NT CP 5mils (01766 762618). Beaumaris 11am, Glan Yr Afon, nr Llangog, 7mils (01248 810208).
Chwilog 11am, Llan Gode, 6 & 8mils (01786 522238).
Merthyr Tydfil - 29 December: Merthyr Tydfil 10.30am, Garwain Forest centre (top end Llyn On Reservoir), 6mils (01443 223470). 1 January: Pontsticill 11am, Red Cow PH, 6mils (01443 834175).
Monmouthshire - 26 December: Chepstow 8.45am, leisure centre (share cars to Tintern), 5.5mils (01594 530928). 29 December: Chepstow 9.30am, leisure centre (share cars to Lydbrook), 8mils (01594 530928). 1 Jan: Chepstow 9.45am, leisure centre (share cars to Redbrook), 8mils (01594 530928).
Powys - 27 December: Aberedw 10am, Seven Stars PH, 6mils (01597 824866). 1 Jan: Welshpool 10am, Church St CP, 6mils (01938 552622).
Swansea - 26 December: Pontardulais 10.30am, Lay-by on hill nr Fountain Inn PH, 6mils (01792 883426). 1 Jan: Gower 10am, A4118: Rose Cottage, Penmaen, 7mils (01792 367188).
Wrexham - 28 December: Minera 10.30am, Lead mines CP, 7mils (01978 755406).

NORTH EAST

Cleveland - 27 December: Spurn 1.30pm, Station, 6mils (01282 474864).
Durham (see also North-

herland) - 30 December: Durham city 1.30pm, Lord Londonderry's statue in market, 5mils (0191 3866886). Barnard Castle 10am, Primrose Bus Point, Prudhoe Place, Newcastle, 8 & 10 & 12mils (0191 4894293).
Humbly Grove - 26 December: Brantingham 10.30am, Pond, 8mils (01904 612401). Beverley 11am, Morrison's Supermarket CP 5mils (01904 612401). 29 December: Welton 10.30am, Pond, 6mils (01904 612401). 1 January: Burwick 10am, Pinfold Lane, 8mils (01904 612401).
Northumberland (see also Durham) - 27 December: Morpeth 9.30am, CP next to Morpeth library, 7mils (01670 518031). 29 December: Blanchland 10.30am, main CP 9mils (0191 4887693). 30 December: Haltwhistle 10.30am, Walter Wilson CP 7mils (0191 4773478).
Rothbury 9.30am, Prudhoe St, Newcastle - coach must be booked, 8-14mils (0191 5490832).
Tyne & Wear - 1 January: Whickham 1pm, Junction Broadway/Felldale Rd, 5mils (0191 4887693).
Yorkshire (North) - 27 December: Reeth 10.30am, Village green, 8mils (01748 822845). 30 December: Grassington 10.30am, National Park CP 7mils (01282 816795). Fountains Abbey 10am, Visitor centre, 10mils (01904 612401). 1 January: Pateley Bridge 10.15am, CP Brimham Rocks, 9mils (01943 873197). Helmsley 10am, Tom Smith's Cross, on A170 6mils W of Helmsley, 12mils (01904 612401).
Yorkshire (South) - 26 December: Mexborough 10.30am, Harlington Rd Day Centre, 4mils (01709 571169).
Rossington 10am, St Michael's church, 6mils (01302 742771). 27 December: Doncaster 10am, Hexthorpe Park Gates, 9mils (01302 856976). Barnburgh 10am, Barnburgh church, 8mils (01709 571169). 1 January: Conisbrough 10am, Castle Inn, 4mils (01709 571169).
Yorkshire (West) - 27 December: Wakefield 2pm, Denby Dale Rd, Holmefield CP 3.5mils (01924 784752). Hebden Bridge 10.30am, Canal Marina, 12mils (01422 885329). 29 December: Ilkley 10.30am, Station, 6mils (01943 863786). 1 Jan: Elwick 11am, Dick Hudson's PH, 7.5mils (0113 2639651). Wakefield 11am, Newmillerdam CP 5mils (01924 820732). 2 Jan: Addingham 1.30pm, Memorial Hall, 6mils (0113 2403889).

NORTH WEST

Cheshire (see also Staffordshire & Derbyshire) - 26 December: Macclesfield 10am, Trentbank Reservoir CP by Ringers hut, 6mils (01625 572455). 27 December: Dunelm Town 10.30am, Massey Hall, NT CP 8mils (0161 7667775). Congleton 1.30pm, Library CP, 6mils (01606 832336). 29 December: Congleton 11am, Library CP (car share to Lach Dennis/Northwich), 5mils (01477 537905). 30 December: Congleton 10.30am, Library CP (car share to Godstrey), 8mils (01477 534238). Culcheth 10.30am, Pack Horse Inn, Church Lane, 10mils (01925 762472). Culcheth 10.30am, Pack Horse Inn, Church Lane, 5mils (01925 763512). 31 December: Congleton 11am, Library CP (car share to Macclesfield), 8mils (01606 832336).
Cumbria - 26 December: Glisland 9.30am, Sands CP Carlisle or 10.30am, Glisland Station CP 7mils (01228 74746). Distington 2pm, Myers & Bowmans old garage, 6mils (01946 831634). 27 December: Walney Island 10am, Earns Bay CP 5mils (01229 824190). Ambleside 8.30am, Sands CP Carlisle or 11am, main CP Ambleside, 6mils (01228 74746). 29 December: Thurstley 9.30am, Sands CP Carlisle or 9.45am, Thurstley, grid ref NY327502, 5mils (01228 74746). 1 Jan: Crosby Ravenscroft 9.30am, Sands CP Carlisle or 10.30am, Centre, 9mils (01228 74746). Distington 2pm, Myers & Bowmans old garage, 6mils (01946 831634).
Lancashire - 26 December: Skelmersdale 10am, Beacon Park Centre, 5mils (01772 812034). Penwortham 1pm, CP next to Fleece Inn, 6mils (01254 822851). 27 December: Rawtenstall 10am, Kay St CP, near centre, 9mils (01706 217577 or 226881). Nelson 10.30am, Victoria park CP Carr Rd, 6mils (01282 613721). 28 December: Edgeworth 9.30am, Barlow Institute, 9mils (01257 263841). 1

Jan: Ormskirk 1pm, Vicarage Lane, Ruff Wood, 5mils (01695 576199). Rivington 11am, hall barn, 9mils (01772 736467).
Manchester - 30 December: Littleborough 11am, Hollingworth Lake visitor centre, 5mils (0161 6438346). 28 December: Romiley 10am, Railway station, 10mils (0161 4949918).
Merseyside - 28 December: Thurston 10.30am, Wirral Country Park, Station Rd, 6mils (0151 6089472). 30 December: Spital 10.30am, Railway station, 6mils (0151 6433070).

CENTRAL SOUTHERN

Hampshire - 27 December: Shawford 11am, Shawford Down CP 6.5mils (01703 789640). Alton 9.30am & 1.30pm, Manor CP (behind Duxford Store), 10 & 5mils (01420 564124). 28 December: Wickham 10am, Wickham Square, 5mils (01329 284556). Breamore 10am, Breamore House CP, 5mils (01722 330214). 29 December: Fritham 10am, CP on edge of woods, nr Royal Oak pub, 7mils (01703 789640). 30 December: Ashurst 10.40am, Railway Station CP, 5mils (01703 789640). 31 December: Ringwood 10am, Moyles Court, 5.5mils (01202 519791). 1 Jan: Bassett 10.30am, Sports Centre, by Bowling Green, 5.5mils (01703 789640).
Isle of Wight - 28 December: Arreton 10am, Arreton Schools, 3 & 5mils (01983 296954).
Oxfordshire - 26 December: Banbury 10am, Red Lion (site of, Upper Waddington, 5.5mils (01295 266979).
**Nettlebed 10am, Crocker End Green, 9mils (01491 574065). 27 December: Henley 10.30am, Greys Rd CP, 4mils (01491 411011). 28 December: Abingdon 10am, Rye Farm CP 8mils (01235 202784). 30 December: Stratton Audley 10.30am, The Church, 7mils (01869 244436). Childrey 10am, Church, 7.5mils (01235 751280). 1 Jan: Woodstock 10.30am, Hensington Rd, 5.5mils (01608 642360).
Nuffield 10am, Homer Farm, 5mils (01491 574065). Wiltshire 26 December: Bradford on Avon 10am, Railway Station CP 5mils (01225 867620).
**Bratton 10.30am, CP at top of Westbury White Horse Hill, 7mils (01380 725457). 27 December: Corsham 10.30am, Newlands Rd CP 4mils (01249 650725). 28 December: Wroughton 10am, Barbary Castle Country Park CP 6mils (01793 740450). 31 December: Avebury 10pm, A4, Overton Hill, 9mils (01793 618346). 1 Jan: Salisbury 9.30am, Salt Lane CP 11mils (01722 324949).
Urchfont 10.30am, Top of Redhorn Hill, 7mils (01380 725457). Avebury 10am, A4, Overton Hill, 9mils (01793 618346). Box 9.30, Selwyn hall CP 9.5mils (01380 859676).****

MIDLANDS

Derbyshire - 27 December: Brackenfield 10am, High Oldish CP 11mils (01629 583883).
**Belper 10am, Field Lane CP, 10mils (01332 662534). 28 Dec: Sandiacre 11am, Library, 8mils (0115 9392554). Taddington 9.30am, Congleton Library CP 9.5mils (01260 274248). 29 Dec: Matlock 10.30am, Railway Station, 6mils (01629 583883).
Hartshorne, nr Swadincote 10.30am, CP opp. Bull's Head (Dethick Hall), 7.5mils (01332 551552). 1 Jan: Whaley Bridge 10.30am, Whaley Bridge canal basin, 8mils (01663 732706). Hereford & Worcester - 27 December: Willersey, nr Broadway 10am, CP at rear of village hall, 5mils (01386 49938).
**Redditch 9.30am, King's Norton Park CP, West Hill Rd, King's Norton, 8mils (0121 445 1884). Cleat 10am, Lay-by NE side of A491, 1/4 mile N of Four Winds restaurant, 7mils (01527 873411). Dinsdor 9.30am, Village Hall, 9mils. 28 December: Malvern 8.30am, Co-op CP High St, Bilston (car share to Malvern), 10mils (01902 871449). 29 Dec: Bewdley 10am, Blackstone picnic area, 6mils (01299 405166).
**Malvern Link 10.30am, Link Top CP 2.5 & 4.5mils (01684 560989). Cotwall 10.15am, Station yard, 5 & 8mils (01684 560989). 30 Dec: Broadway 10am, Leamington Rd CP, 5mils (01386 841791). Lickley Hills 10am, visitor centre, 6mils (01926 776363). Hagley 10am, station, 6mils (01384 395682). 1 Jan: Dodford 10am, Dodford Inn CP 6mils (0121 4765420).
Leicestershire - 26 December: Woodhouse Eaves 10.30am, Main St CP 6mils (01509 413801). Anstey 2pm, Top Green, 4mils (0116 2882415). 27 December: Knaresborough 10.15am, Village Centre, 8mils (01572 757422). Cold Newton 10am, Burley Way (The Pineapple), Leicester, 8mils******

(01664 812771). 1 Jan: Queniborough 10am, Burleys Way (The Pineapple), Leicester, 7mils (0116 3418887).
Coalville 10am, rear CP NW Leicestershire Council Offices, 6mils (0116 2365789). Hinckley 10.30am, Brunel Rd, 8mils (01455 220418). Northamptonshire - 26 December: Isham 10am, Post Office, South St, 4.5mils (01536 726588).
Isham 1pm, The Lilacs PH, 4mils (01536 511182). Earls Barton 10.30am, Earls Barton Square, 6mils (01604 810259). Scaldwell 9am, church, 6.5mils (01604 492265). 27 Dec: East Carlton 9.30am, 12 & 6mils. 9.45am. 10mils, 10am. 4mils, 1.30pm. 4.5mils, Country Park (01933 460373). 28 Dec: Earls Barton 9.30am, Square, 6mils (01604 811199). 1 Jan: Grendon 10.30am, nr Village hall, 5.5mils (01933 663603).

Nottinghamshire - 26 December: Misterton 10am, Pack & Inn, 7mils (01427 838789).
**Retford 11am, CP off Chaplegate, 5mils (01777 838763). 27 December: Stapleford 9.30am, London Rd CP Newark & 9.45, North CP Stapleford Woods, 3.5mils (01636 700824). Strelley 10.15am, Church, 9mils (0115 982102). Eakring 10.30am, Entrance of Redgate Wood, Whitesh Lane, 8mils (0115 920466). 30 December: Kingson on Soar 10.15am, Village Green, 7mils (0115 925466). 1 January: Lowdham 10.30am, North end of Main St, 8mils (0115 923560).
Strelley 10.30am, Broad Oak PH CP 6mils (0115 925466). New Clipstone 10.30am, Clipstone Drive, 8mils (0115 982075). Shropshire - 27 December: Craven Arms 10.30am, CP off Corvedale Rd, 8mils (01694 781465). 28 Dec: Wellington 10am, Forest Glen CP, Cludley lane, 8mils (01952 298297). 29 Dec: Broseley 9.30am, Health centre CP 11mils (01952 882228). 30 December: Church Stretton 10am, Carding Mill Valley (before cafe CP), 8mils (01743 244923). 1 Jan: Oswestry 10am, Central CP, 9.5mils (01691 623026).
Staffordshire - 26 December: Riddup 10am, Congleton Library CP 8mils (01782 512545). 27 December: Aldridge 9am, South Parade CP, Sutton Coldfield, 8mils (0121 3293733).
**Sandon 8.30am, Slip Rd opp. Dog & Doublet PH at junc. of Sandon Lane & A51, 5mils (01785 662237). 28 December: Meerbrook 10am & 1.30pm, Tittesworth Reservoir Amenity Area CP 5mils & 5mils (01782 512545). 29 December: Stone 9.45am, Westbridge Park CP 6.5mils (01785 815141).
Warwickshire - 26 December: Cherington 9.30am, In lane opposite Weston Mill, 9mils (01608 662279). 27 Dec: Henley in Arden 10am, Prince Harry's Rd CP 7mils (0121 779 4456). 30 Dec: Ilmington 10am, Layby on Ilmington-Darlington Rd, 9mils (01789 285426).
Edgill Hill 10am, Ratley Rd, 6mils (01608 642360). 1 Jan: Kenilworth 10am, Castle CP 5mils (01203 621649). Stratford on Avon 10.30am, Top of Maidenhead Rd, 7mils (01789 298387).****

EAST ANGLIA

Cambridgeshire - 26 December: Huntingdon 10am, Riverside CP 6mils (01480 458249). 27 December: Swaffham Prior 10.30am, Village Hall, 5mils (01638 665949).
**Helpston 2pm, Church, 3mils (01733 222880). 28 December: Ely 10am, Cathedral CP Barton Rd, 6mils (01223 833417).
**Marholm 2pm, Village Hall, 4mils (01733 577482). 31 Dec: Peterborough 1.30pm, Ferry Meadows, Visitors Centre, 5mils (01733 810303). 1 Jan: Snaithwell 10.30am, park nr church, 5mils (01638 665949). Peterborough 10am, Key Theatre CP, 8mils (01733 577482).
Lincolnshire - 26 December: Horncastle 10am, Market Place, 5mils (01507 527358).
Lincoln 10.30am, The Lions in the Arboretum, Monks Road, 4mils (01522 52934). 28 December: Horncastle 10.30am, Swimming Pool, 8.5mils (01522 793172). 1 January: Lincoln 10.30am,****



Grandstand, West Common, Carlisle Rd, 8mils (01522 522534).
Broughton 10.30am, CP on Ermine St, 10mils. Spalding 11am, Ayscoughie Gardens, 5mils (01406 362888). Norfolk - 26 December: Brancaster 11am, Beach CP 6mils (01945 587443). 27 Dec: King's Lynn 10.30am, CP Park Farm, Snettisham, 4mils (01553 671829).
Suffolk - 26 December: Horringer 10.30am, Community centre, 5mils (01259 250 815). 27 Dec: Stowmarket 10.30am, ICI works CP Needham Rd, 5mils (01449 721121).
Sudbury 10.30am, The Croft, N of St Gregory's Church, 5mils (01787 371880). 1 January: Culford 10.30am, Culford School Sports Centre CP 8mils (01359 250815).

SOUTH EAST

Bedfordshire - 26 December: Old Warden 10.30am, Church, 7mils (01234 353704). 27 December: Ampthill 10.30am, Park CP, 7mils (01234 353704).
**Barton-le-Clay 10am, Old Rd, 7mils (01582 883252). 28 December: Stotfold 10.30am, The Green, 7mils (01234 353704). 29 December: Pottun 10.30am, Bull St CP 6mils (01234 381508). Luton 1pm, Copt Hall off Wheatthamstead, Lower Harpenden Rd, 3mils (01582 661944).
**30 Dec: Hinxworth 10.30am, Centre, 9mils (01234 353704). Bromham 10.30am, Mill, 5mils (01234 301027).
**Leighton Buzzard 9.30am, Woburn village CP (opp. church), 5mils (01525 377599). 31 Dec: Sundon Hills 10.30am, CP, 7mils (01462 700501). 1 Jan: Oakley 10am, Bedford Arms, 6mils (01234 823075).
Shillington 10.30am, Musgrave Arms, 7mils (01234 353704). Dunstable 10.30am, Downs visitor centre, 6mils (01582 668824). Berkshire - 26 December: Chapel Row 11am, Bucklebury Common CP 5mils (0118 9617972). 27 Dec: Maidenhead 10.15am, NT CP Pinkneys Drive, 4mils (01628 622991). 29 Dec: Hungerford 10.5am, Station CP 11mils (01635 32842). 30 Dec: Cookham Dean 10.15am, Winter Hill NT CP 3.5mils (01628 622991). 1 Jan: Hurley 10.30am, CP nr church, 5mils (0118 9403158). Pangbourne 2pm, Public CP Station******

Rd, 5mils (0118 9882674).
Buckinghamshire - 27 Dec: Bourne End 10.30am, CP Moorholme Lane, Well End, 5mils (01628 483430).
**Bourne End 1.30pm, CP Moorholme Lane, Well End, 5mils (01494 881543). 29 Dec: Brill 8am, Windmill, 15mils (01869 601452). 30 Dec: Dorney 11am, Main gates to Dorney Court, 5mils (01753 642740).
**Haddenham 10.30am, Village Hall CP (corner of Bank's Rd and Churchway), 6mils (01296 427717). 1 Jan: Stokenchurch 11am, Kings Arms, 8.5mils (01494 528381).
Princes Risborough 10.30am, The Mount CP (corner of Church St & Stratton Rd), 6mils (01296 427717). Essex - 26 Dec: Rochford 10am, Rail Station, 9mils (01702 582230).
Billerica 10am, CP off High St, at****

523513).
**Danbury 10.30am, NT CP Danbury Common, 6mils (01245 609064). 30 Dec: Broomfield 10.30am, Community Centre CP 7.5mils (01245 609064). 31 Dec: Writtle 10.30am, Hylands Park, 9mils (01245 609064). 1 Jan: Terling 10.30am, The Raleigh Arms PH, 6mils (01245 609064).
**Waltham Abbey 10.30am, Lee Valley Park, Highbridge CP off A101, 4mils (01277 214684).
Sible Hedingham 11am, Christmas field, nr school, 7mils (01376 331909). Chingford 11am, BR Station, 6mils (0181 527 3938). Hertfordshire - 26 Dec: Hertford/Hoddeson 10.30am, Bayford Station CP 8mils (0181 360 0268). 30 Dec: Hinxworth 10am, High St, 9mils (01234 353704). 31 Dec: Reed 9.30am, Heath Sports Centre CP Baldock Rd, Royston, 5mils (01763 242677). 1 Jan: South Mimms 10.30am, Blackhorse Lane, 7mils (0181 4492139).
Kent - 26 Dec: Teston 10.30am, Picnic site, 5.5mils (01732 851310). 27 Dec: Sandgate 10am, CP nr castle, 7mils (01843 596249).
**Tonbridge 10.30am, Watergate big bridge over the Medway, by castle, 5.5mils (01732 851310). 28 Dec: Yalding 10.30am, Station, 5mils (01732 851310).
**Charing 10.30am, Church (Market Place), 6mils (01222 891277). 29 Dec: Selling 10am, Ferry Wood CP 6mils, 30 Dec: Lamberhurst 10.30am, CP in village centre, 5mils (01892 525948).
**West Malling 10.30am, CP behind Tesco, 4mils (01732 851310).
**Tonbridge 10.30am, Dene Park CP 4 miles N of Tonbridge, 7.5mils (01634 711734).
**Westerham 10am, Green, 8mils (0181 462215). 1 Jan: Sandling, nr Maidstone 11am, Old A229 Rd, near Tyland Barn (off Bluebell Hill, southbound carriageway), 5mils (01634 364855).
London - 26 Dec: East Finchley 10.30am, Underground station, 7.5mils (0181 883 8190).
**Keston 10am, Commons CP 5mils (0181 857 0300). 28 Dec: Hayes 10am, Station, 9mils (0181 462 1168).
**Woodford Green 10.30am, Hawkey Hall, Broadmead Rd, 6mils (0181 504 5267). 28 Dec: Hainault 10am, CP by lake, Hainault Forest, 5mils (0181 504 5267). 1 Jan: Keston 1pm, Ponds CP Westerham Rd, 8mils (0181 467 4698).
Surrey - 26 Dec: Shalford 10.15am & 1.45pm, The Parrot PH, park in side road leading to Industrial Estate, 5mils & 5mils (01252 657741).
**Reigate 10am, CP top of Reigate Hill off A217, 6mils (01737 833155).
**Elstead 10am, The Moat CP 5mils (01428 682842).
**Headley 10am, Heath main CP (opp. cricket ground), 5mils (0181 3372485). 27 Dec: Wotton 10am, Friday St CP 8mils (01932 341463).
**Egham 10am, Bishopgate Entrance to Windsor Great Park, 7mils (01344 776621).
Chobham 10.30am, Village CP 7mils (01483 768548). 28 Dec: Oxshott 10.30am, Station, 7mils.**************************

SOUTH WEST

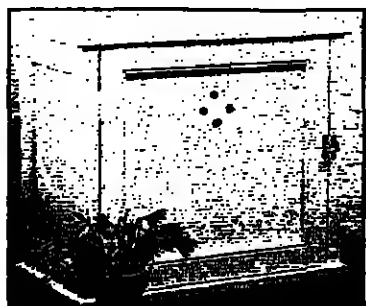
Avon - see Gloucestershire and Somerset
Cornwall - 27 Dec: Holywell Bay 10.30am, NT CP 8mils (01637 875199).
**Godolphin 10am, garage, park in village or Gwedna Woods, 7mils. 28 Dec: Polzeath 1.30pm, CP 4mils (01208 73489).
**Constantine 1.30pm, Village CP 4.5mils. 1 Jan: Gorran Churchtown 10.30am, 6mils (01726 842101).
Gweek 10.30am, Bridge at Gweek, Nr Helston, 10mils (01326 340728). Devon - 26 Dec: Bickleigh 11am, Devonshire Centre, Mill CP 6mils (01392 413073).
**Barnstaple 10.30am, Arlington Court NT CP 5mils (01271 376274).
**Totnes 10am, Borough CP 10.30am, Woolston Green, 5.5mils (01803 862829). 27 Dec: Bovey Tracey 10am, Lower CP 8mils (01392 413073). 30 Dec: Bampton 10.15am, CP (next to Swan hotel), 4.5mils (01398 323456).
Dartington 10.30am, Meadowbrook CP 5.5m********

1999: a space odyssey

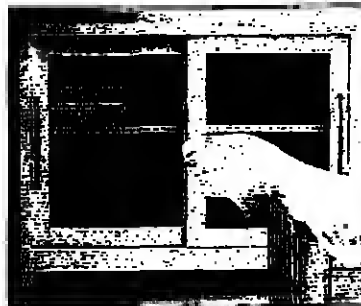
Boxing Day is designed for lounging at home – but first there are some serious purchases to be considered. If you want to know just where to put all those presents, Rhiannon Batten has the answers.

TOILETRIES:

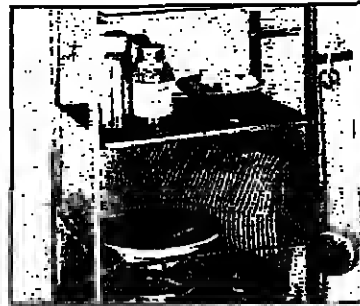
With the fine packaging – and posier attributes – of a good toiletry gift set, it's tempting to leave your Christmas bubble bath out on display. If you don't want to come home one day to find that greedy fingers have been helping themselves to your sensuous massage oil, though, keep them safely out of harm's way in a neat and sleek bathroom cabinet.



Bathroom cupboard with one shelf, £125, House (01258 454884 for mail order)



Ekenas low unit, £299, Habitat (0645 334433 for nearest store)



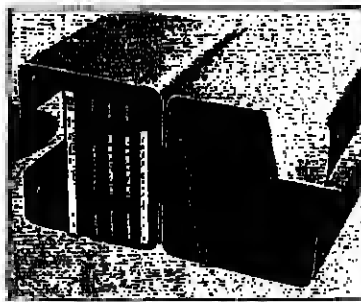
Bathroom trolley, £109.95, The Holding Company (0171-610 9160)

CDS:

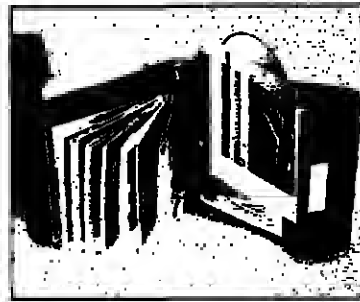
For anyone with a bulging CD collection, Boxing Day is D-Day – or should that be CD-Day? Blitz your Boyzone and have a Massive Attack on the organisation front with some serious CD storage equipment. Whether it's a walk-in musical wardrobe you require or the proportional equivalent of an elfin shoe box, make sure you give yourself room to expand.



Three-drawer CD case, £18, Muji (0171-323 2208 for nearest store)



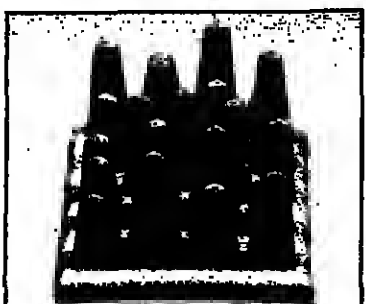
Cecchi CD box, £7.50, Habitat (0645 334433 for nearest store)



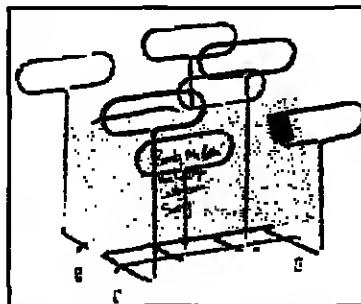
Travel CD bag, £12.50, The Holding Company (0171-610 9160)

CARDS AND LETTERS:

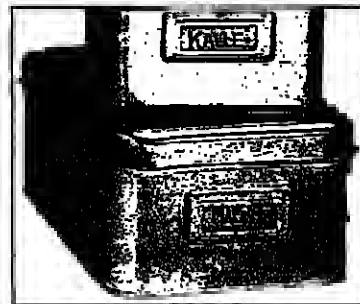
If you admit to finding unscrupulous magpies infuriatingly difficult to live with (recycling's great but does anyone really remember to use their Christmas cards to cut down into eco-friendlier gift tags next year?), brute force is the only way out. Have done with chaos – it's never organised – and take charge with some stylish but pleasingly functional filing equipment.



Mark Garside Digital Grass letter holder, £12.99, Same (0171-247 9992)



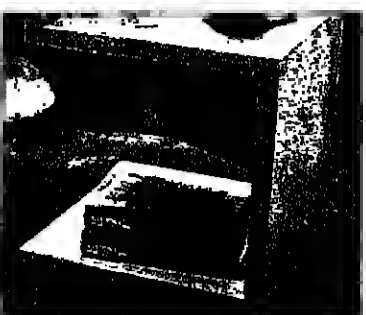
Forest letter rack, £8.95, Ocean Warehouse Shop (0171-670 1222)



Set of two Emu boxes, £9.50, IKEA (0181-208 5607 for nearest store)

BOOKS:

Books should not be hidden away under tables, inside desks and next to beds. Colour-coded, subject-themed, or nonchalantly shoved together, truth is they make the perfect display objects – eye-catching, impressive (if you read the right books, of course) and easily changed to suit the mood – so be brazen and create a library in the literary wilderness of your front room.



Penta occasional beech table, £89, Habitat (0645 334433 for nearest store)



Lack shelf unit, £89, IKEA (enquiries and nearest store, 0181-208 5607)



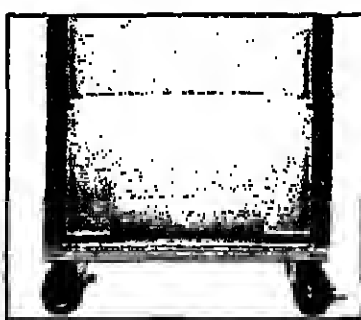
Granite bookends, £14.95 per pair, Ocean (0870 848484 for mail order)

TOYS:

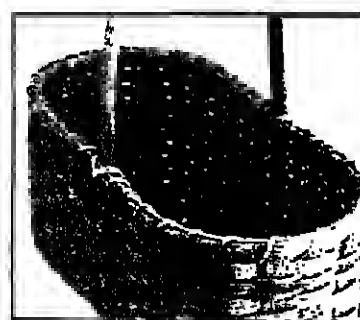
The thing about toys – whether they are of the adult or the juvenile sort – is that they were designed to be played with so keeping them in enforced order is always going to be an uphill struggle. But, even if the scattered-around-the-carpet habitat is their home of choice, at least try to tempt your toys into confinement with some stylish storage options.



PP Clip handle boxes, from £6.95, Muji (0171-323 2208 for nearest store)



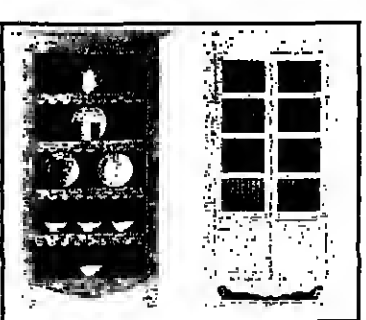
Plywood storage unit with PP drawers, £135, Muji (0171-323 2208 for nearest store)



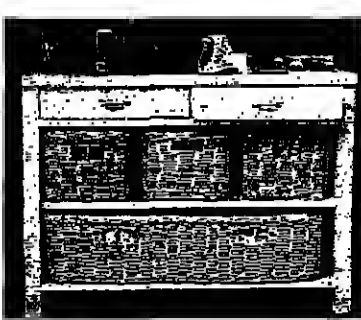
Stair basket, £45.95, Shaker (0171-724 7672 for mail order and enquiries)

KITCHENWARE:

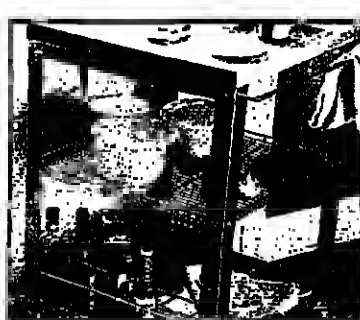
The very culinary tools that are given to make your life easier – blenders, matching 60-piece dinner sets, steamer pans and so on – usually just end up by leaving you with a Krypton Factor-style obstacle course every time you step into the kitchen. To make your meetings with the midnight toast fiend easier and your path to soufflé success a little less messy, clear the decks with some clever kitchen cupboardry.



Maximus tall cabinets, from £895, Colour Blue (0171-820 7700)



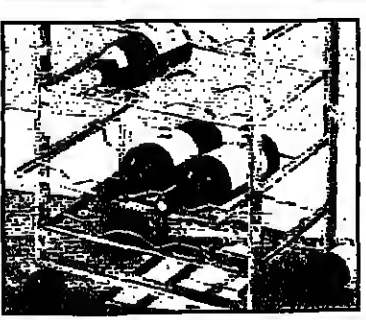
Oliva beech kitchen units, from £599, Habitat (0645 334433 for nearest store)



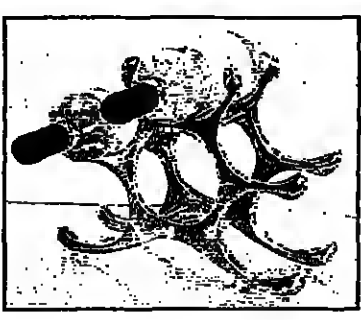
Butcher's block trolley, £179.95, The Holding Company (0171-610 9160)

WINE BOTTLES:

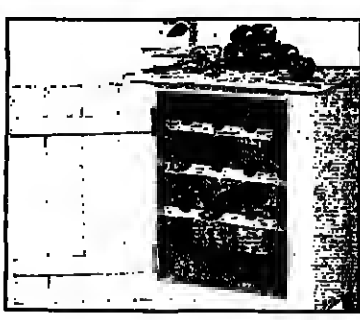
If you fancy yourself as something of a wine buff – and you have a portly-enough post-Christmas wine cellar to merit such a label – forget sniffing, sipping and spitting your way to the top and start caring for your bottles with the appropriate stacking. And for those who have no such lofty aspirations, at least treat your supermarket plonk to a change of image by leaving it on a stylish shelf.



Bottle tower, £99, Divertimenti (0181-246 4300)



Polished aluminium 6-bottle stand, £33, Millennium (07071 880760)



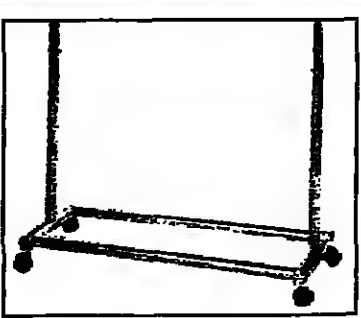
Country cupboard, £149, and wine rack insert, £29.95, Ocean (0870 848484)

CLOTHES:

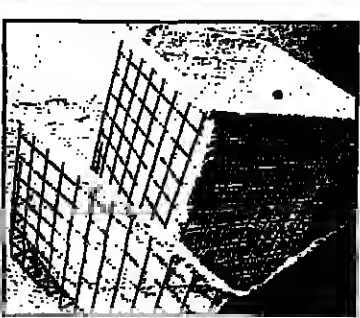
OK, no-one actually likes to see people ironing their knickers or colour-coding their t-shirts but, even for the less-obsessed with neatness, it's time to sharpen up and do away with the heap-on-the-floor school of wardrobing. With the number of funky hangers you can organise your clothes around, there's no excuse for letting them lie around gathering dust – whatever state your wardrobe is in, learn to dress it well.



Giant padded Sloppy Joe laundry bag, £29.99, The White Company (0171-385 7988)



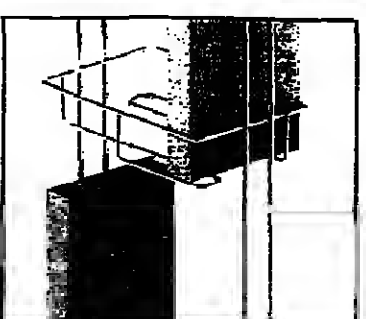
Adjustable steel hanging rail, £32, Muji (0171-323 2208 for nearest store)



Mesh chrome metal wire linen baskets, from £29, Habitat (0645 334433)

VIDEOS:

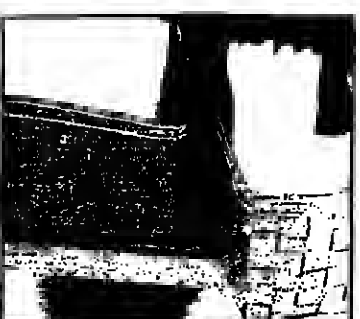
Video nasties are literally just that for anyone struggling with their Feng Shui tendencies – all those garish plastic boxes, stray tapes without their covers and, of course, the humiliation of having labels that tell everyone else exactly what you're watching. Do your aesthetic side a favour and invest in some suitably sophisticated casing for your home entertainment.



Wire video rack, £29.95, Ocean Warehouse Shop (0171-670 1222)



Kelly Hoppen lacquer video box, £30, Debenhams (0171-408 4444)



Chocolate brown soft woven leather baskets, from £25, The Holding Company (0171-610 9160)

SIX OF THE BEST

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Niro stemmed hand-blown flute, £6.50, Habitat (call 0645 334433 for details)



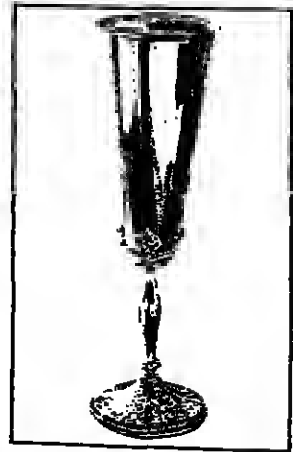
Encore flute, £77 each or £140 for two, Royal Brierley Crystal (01384 70161)



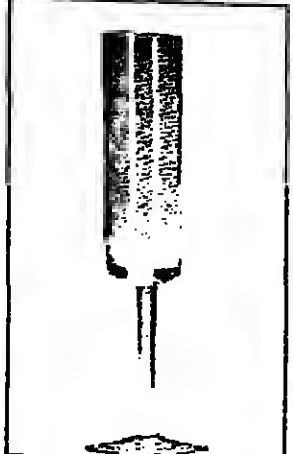
Hollow-stemmed champagne flutes, £12.95 for two, Divertimenti (0181-246 4300)



Wine Gourmet flutes with chocolate truffles, £15 for two, Debenhams (0171-408 4444)



Sterling silver flutes decorated with heart-shaped leaves, £304 for two, V&A (01672 542288)



Otto flutes, from £10 each, LSA International (for stockists, call 01932 789721)

The New Beetle is set to become a design classic, but can its performance live up to its looks? By John Simister

The Bug is back – and it bites

You must have heard of the New Beetle. Derived from a concept car created by designers in Volkswagen's Californian creativity outpost, and hang on target for America's youthful sensibilities, be they actual or wishful, the automotive insect idea has gone down a storm in the States. And now the Mexican-built New Beetle is coming to Europe. Britain's first batch of 1,000 cars, all left-hand drive and costing about £16,200 with lashings of equipment, arrives in January, right-hand drives following at the end of 1999.

The New Beetle, as it is officially known, is based on underpinnings shared with the VW Golf and Bora, the Audi A3 and TT, the Skoda Octavia and the new Seat Toledo. That means it has a front-mounted, water-cooled engine and front-wheel drive, instead of an air-cooled, flat-four rattle at the rear. But that doesn't stop the shape from being truly Beetleish, almost a cartoon of the original but with modern detailing.

It's inspired by a past car, one which has been replicated more than any other (22 million and rising as it is still being made at the Mexican factory), but otherwise there's not much that's slavishly retro apart from two looped, plastic grab-handles. Everything else is a cleaned-up, topological distortion of before, including bash-proof plastic mudguards so it no longer matters that you can't see them from the driver's seat.

So why has Volkswagen produced such a folly? The Concept One show car, unveiled in Detroit in 1994 as a bit of fun, surprised Volkswagen with the strength of pent-up demand. So the company looked into making a production version, and here it is. The original Beetle was a functional people's car, but it became a symbol of youth and universality against excess and obsolescence. The new one reinterprets what the original became, rather than what it was conceived to be.

Rover's upcoming new Mini has the same job to do. You might have seen a New Beetle here already, but it will have been a US-specification car, imported privately or by a specialist. Word has spread, however, and imaginations are fired up. My daughter (11) has begged, demanded, and implored me to bring one home on test so that she and her friends can go to school in it. Nothing is currently cooler than a New Beetle.

After all this, it's actually a bit of a surprise to sit in one, ready to drive off into a lower-powered sunset. For that's the point: Volkswagen is pushing a dream made modern reality, sponsoring an Andy Warhol exhibition at its Wolfsburg, Germany home to coincide with the Beetle's launch, and supplying every New Beetle with a facia-mounted flower vase in the manner of a Sixties American Beetle accessory.

There are two engines available, a 115bhp, 2.0-litre petrol and a 90bhp, 1.9-litre turbodiesel. A petrol V5



The New Beetle – it combines Sixties flower-power design nostalgia with the practicality and performance of a Nineties Golf

(150bhp, 2.3 litres) will follow. Undoubtedly the engine to have is the TDI diesel, because the petrol engine feels and sounds too, well, "normal". The diesel's clattery sound and low-revving nature better suit the expectations that the Beetle's shape generates, even if

Sportier, more powerful and with better handling than the original, the New Beetle is a dream made modern reality

the sound does emanate from the wrong end. And with a hefty 155lb ft of torque, the Beetle TDI scuttles along with a good deal more verve than the original ever did. It is also a far better bet in the bends, thanks to its modern engine and suspension layout. It feels quite sporty, actually, with the tautest feel and crispest steering of all the current generation of Golf-based cars.

So it is fun to drive, as well as to look at and be in. Clearly, there is less room inside than in a Golf, but the Beetle is still a proper four-seater and its hatchback – the original certainly didn't have one of those – reveals a meaningful boot space. The rear seat folds, of course, but so did the old one's. The driver is confronted with a typical Beetle instrument cluster, based on a huge, round speedometer, inset this time with a little fuel gauge and an equally small rev-counter. The seat fabrics echo the body colour: a vivid citrus yellow/green in my car, and plastic panels below the window line are designed to look like painted metal. Dimpled textures and mock-aluminium abound, and the only leather-grain look is to be found on the gear lever's gaiter. That's an error: the gaiter should be in black rubber, and the lever should be long and spindly. It has the correct springy, clonky action, though.

Well, are you convinced? It's the Disneyland effect: you feel cynical before the experience, but end up captivated. It worked for me, anyway. Obviously there is no sensible reason to buy a Beetle instead of a Golf, but neither has Mickey Mouse ever claimed to be a real rodent.

SPECIFICATIONS

Volkswagen Beetle TDI Price: £16,200
 Engine: 1,896cc, four cylinders, eight valves, direct-injection turbodiesel, 90bhp at 3,750rpm
 Transmission: five-speed gearbox, front-wheel drive
 Performance: 106mph, 0-60 in 12.8sec, 49-54mpg

Rivals
 The New Beetle has no direct rivals. If you want one, nothing else is likely to do. The role of the old Beetle has been taken over by successive generations of the Golf, and the new one is designed for a different and less serious job. Rover's new Mini, due in 2000, is inspired by the 1959 original and comes the closest to the New Beetle idea.

... but the prototype is still crawling along

If you fancy Beetle style, but not the new price tag, hunt down an original. Just be wary of the year, warns James Ruppert

BEETLEMANIA. THERE is no other explanation for it. The queues for the all-new Volkswagen Beetle are stretching into the next millennium, both in the UK and worldwide. When it finally arrives in Britain in the new year, it will be expensive and left-hand drive. No wonder potential buyers after some style and fun are starting to take a closer look at the original model.

No other car this century has cultivated such devotion, passion and sales, the latter in excess of 22 million. Surely 22 million buyers can't be wrong? An objective opinion would be that it was slow, cramped, noisy, and had potentially lethal handling. Then again, it was relatively cheap, had simple mechanics and was well built, easy to drive with light controls and an unburstable, air-cooled engine.

Never mind all that: no other car looked so distinctive and lovable, or remained in constant production for more than 50 years. A survivor, style icon and design classic, it doesn't

matter what you call it, just say the word Beetle and everyone knows what car you are referring to.

If you've decided that a Beetle is for you, and I would drive one first before making a final decision, be aware that there are millions to choose from, and it pays to be choosy. There are probably more bodged and broken Beetles on sale than any other classic, and the secret is finding a sound, rust-free original, or one properly restored.

Prices have remained stable, which mean high. Good examples are rarely less than £2,000, but expect to pay around £3,000 for a very tidy and usable 1300. Most in demand though, are the Cabriolets which command prices in the region of £7-£9,000, providing they are factory originals and not an owner DIY hack-saw job.

First choose your model; as a rule, the later the better. I'll spare you the very long history lesson except to say that by 1980, when production had moved to Mexico,



every one of the Beetle's 5,500 parts had been changed except for the metal channel which contained the boot and bonnet sealing rubbers. So although they look similar, Beetles have changed.

Enthusiasts will hanker after split rear-window models built until 1953, then the oval window models, which stayed in production until

it used to be, and neither are old Beetles. When in doubt, buy from an established specialist, use the guidance of the owner's club and get an expert to help you check a potential Beetle out.

In the first instance, though, even the novice can spot whether a Beetle is worth taking seriously. Not surprisingly, rust is the model's biggest enemy. Look everywhere: pull up carpets and look closely around the wheel arches, wings, in the boot and around the suspension. The engines are reliable but prone to oil leaks and overheating. Interiors are generally hard wearing.

The good news with mechanical failures is that parts are relatively cheap and plentiful. Body panels, especially for the later models, are not a problem either. However, a full restoration by an expert is going to cost a lot of money. It is better to buy a Beetle with sound bodywork but a failing engine, rather than the other way around. Try and look at plenty of Beetles: the more you see,

the more familiar you will become with their faults and the differences in condition. I know – I've looked.

Grundy Mack, a classic car dealer in Huddersfield, had a great value convertible, imported from Italy, for just £4,995. A blue 1966 model import at Grange Classics near Banbury was in excellent condition for £2,850. So there are bargains. But I also saw some rubbish from £800 in the local paper.

If looking for an old Beetle is too much trouble, then how about a brand new, old Beetle fresh from the Mexican factory? Beetles UK Ltd supply the latest specification, classic-shape examples with a modern 1.6 litre fuel-injected engine for just £7,995 on the road. Why bother with a modern, pseudo Beetle which is only a rebodied Golf, when you can buy an original in perfect working order at half the cost?

Grange Classics, 01295 712777; Grundy Mack, 01484 450446; Beetles UK Ltd 01454 228999

Andy McNabb's 'Bravo Two Zero' video, starring Sean Bean is released by BBC Worldwide priced at £14.99. He was speaking to James Ruppert

The pick-up – or how to be a cowboy in Clapham

WHETHER IT'S fast food, motorcycling or bombing Iraq, Britain has a habit of following America. A few years after Henry Ford put America on wheels, Herbert Austin copied a trick or two in order to help motorise the UK.

Four-wheel drives are now the big thing in America, and have been for some time. And now, surprise, surprise, the segment of the market accelerating fastest here, and in Europe, is 4x4s, too.

There are, of course, some things that are peculiarly and uniquely American, such as pastrami-on-rye sandwiches, baseball and Yank Tank cars. Do pick-up trucks fall into the same

category? Or, like T-shirts, Disney stores and 4x4s, is this yet another Americanism bound to dilute our quaint cultural purity? The Yanks love 'em. So much so that the best selling vehicle in America this year – as with last year and the year before that – is the Ford F-series pick-up.

The Ford boss, Jac Nasser, once told me that the Yanks like pick-ups because basically, they are the modern equivalent of the horse. "There is a bit of the Wild West in every American," said Nasser. "And there is something very cowboy-like about the pick-up truck."

Pick-up sales are booming in the UK – they're up 46 per cent

on last year, albeit from a very modest base. And the best challenger, Mitsubishi's L200 pick-up, has only just hit Britain's fens, moors, motorways and high streets – at surprisingly low prices.

Before dismissing the pick-up as just another daft, eccentric Americanism, it's worth examining these over-sized Tonka Toys. Most of us may lead sober, sensible lives, but clearly when we visit our local car dealers we become more Indiana Jones-like.

"If everyone bought cars purely on sensible grounds, we'd all be driving Ford Fiastas," the ex-boss of Aston Martin, Victor Gauntlett, once told me. "Thank



GAVIN GREEN

Pick-up sales are booming but unlikely to overtake 4x4s – we fancy ourselves as squires, not cowboys

God, when it comes to cars, most of us show pleasing signs of insanity."

What could be crazier than buying vast 4x4s, with all that expensive off-road hardware and truck-like diesel or V8 engines, and then simply using them around town? It's crazy, but true. They don't even have any more carrying space, either for people or luggage, than a normal car.

The Mitsubishi L200 has all the advantages of a typical 4x4 – high driving position, Action Man styling, go-anywhere capability. There is nothing a new Land Rover Discovery (£25,520) can do that an L200 Double Cab "4 Life" (£19,195)

can't. To boot, the L200 has the carrying capacity of, well, a pick-up. This adds to its "lifestyle" capability; to borrow one of the key phrases of the 4x4 propagandists.

The cargo area is big enough to put four mountain bikes, or a couple of jet skis, or there is even enough space for snow-skiing equipment for a party of five. It's just as ideal for a major shopping expedition to Ikea or the local Homebase.

This is particularly useful in DIY-mad Britain. It's also great for horsey activities, another British eccentricity. A cargo bed cover is available to keep out fast-fingered felons.

On the road, the L200 is

surprisingly refined. It is quieter and smoother than the latest, much-improved Discovery, and feels less truck-like to drive. It is also likely to be more reliable.

The rear bench provides comfortable transport for three adults, helped by the vehicle's substantial width.

So is this the "Next Big Thing" in Britain? Probably not. Unlike the Yanks, we do not harbour a secret desire to be cowboys. Instead, we fantasise about being country squires, which is why the Range Rover is so popular. But if there was any sense in the car market – and there is not – more people would buy an L200 than any other large off-roader.

PROPERTY

Your house may look marvellous in its festive finery, but decorations can spell disaster for prospective sellers. By Penny Jackson

Bring down the holly and the ivy

Putting up Christmas decorations rates as one of the most enjoyable domestic jobs, then taking them down comes pretty close to the bottom of the ratings list. So pity the London flat owner who had to remove all evidence of her seasonal labours a day after she had completed her handiwork.

A new client called to say that her South Kensington property was beautifully decorated and ready for the photographer," says Rebecca Read, of the estate agents Cluttons Daniel Smith. "I had visions of pristine paintwork and immaculate walls, but instead we walked into a Christmas-card scene. It had obviously taken hours to create. We then had to break it to the owner that everything had to come down."

A key objective of all property photographers is to produce an unseasonal picture as possible. Another is to avoid clutter. Read says: "There were garlands and crackers, cards and candles. All the presents had been wrapped and beautifully laid out. It took an hour to move just the Christmas tree, which was huge. The owner couldn't see the problem and thought she had done a marvellous job. We had to explain how inappropriate it would look in

a brochure by the second week of January, let alone the spring."

It is not unusual to find Read in a client's bare winter garden comes pretty close to the bottom of the ratings list. So pity the London flat owner who had to remove all evidence of her seasonal labours a day after she had completed her handiwork.

Her vast bag of flowers comes into its own for the interior shots. The real thing, though, can be a trap for the unwary. Poinsettias and Christmas cacti in full flower should be banished from the room if a photographer is en route. And as for the hosts of golden daffodils that sellers long to share with each prospective buyer, they are banned from the sights of every camera. No one in September can pass off a house surrounded by dancing daffodils as a recent arrival on the market.

Just about everything we seize on to photograph for the family album - three feet of snow on the lawn, the old cherry tree in blossom and mantelpieces weighed down under holly branches and fir cones - are the last pictures that any selling agent wants to see in the particulars.

"You have to listen to what clients say because they are paying for photography, but they are also paying for your advice. Far too many



All dressed up: seasonal decorations - such as these adorning a house in Dundee - can hinder the sale of a home

Fotopress

things become distractions and you have to say if a house is over-decorated. The interiors should appear as large and inviting as possible," says Edward Rook, from the country house department of Knight Frank. This could well mean turning on the lamps, opening the curtains and the fires blazing all at once.

Unless a buyer has an obsession with Christmas, festive decorations are not going to clinch a sale. Yet most people feel their homes look most inviting at this time of year. "There is always a chance of doing a deal on Christmas Eve or between

Christmas and the New Year," says Rook. "Tastefully placed holly and a lovely tree can add warmth and atmosphere, but the same cannot be said if rooms are decked out with streamers and paper chains made by four-year-olds."

Knight Frank issues advice to its photographers with tips which include lawns mown in stripes, stable doors left open, the gravel raked and tables laid for a meal. Chris Wood, a property and interiors photographer who helped dismantle the decorations in the South Kensington flat, is used to rearranging people's

bomes. "I draw the line at washing up the dirty plates, though."

The crucial art of making a room look as large as possible is not helped by the current trend for beige. "If you have a pale carpet, walls, ceiling and furniture, it all blends into an indistinguishable whole," says Wood. "A rug, a vase of flowers or cushions are enough to break it up. Yellow always works well in pictures while black always looks terrible even if it has a fancy finish."

Wood tries to put himself in the shoes of whoever opens the brochure. This often means turning a

deaf ear to the seller's suggestions. "Even if you can stand with your back in the oven and see 60ft to the end of the drawing room, I have to try to explain that it will make a terrible picture."

Vendors can pay up to several thousand pounds for a brochure and their opinions cannot be dismissed out of hand. "The debate with clients about which photographs to use can go on for hours," says Richard Gayner, from the country department of FFD Savills. "They often fix on aerial shots or they want the house to be seen from different an-

gles, whereas we want to show just enough to encourage buyers to jump in the car. In the country the setting is the most important issue."

Gayner tells a story that will warm the heart of anyone desperately trying to keep a large house in viewing order. "A wealthy family arranged to meet an agent at a country house, only to tell him on their arrival that they didn't want to go in. When he asked why not he was told that it might put them off buying it." Just what those of us who wouldn't dare let a photographer loose in the house like to bear.

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Day the developers met their match

In the Eighties, Bow Quarter was conceived as a fun place for young people. Now, the recession over, these loft-dwellers are thriving again. By Robert Liebman

THIS VILLAGE shop has the usual staples plus a special range of food and videos designed to appeal to the locals. Goat's piss wine. Tarragon and lime mayonnaise. Own-brand hand-made fudge. I blush to tell you the names of the videos, but *Sheldon does San Francisco* would capture their essence.

The village which this particular shop caters for is Bow Quarter, the residential conversion on the site of the Bryant & May matchstick factory in Bow, east London.

The original factory buildings occupy a portion of the seven-acre site, and a few years ago Ballymore built an additional 170 flats on adjacent land within the estate, providing a total of 700 flats, in seven blocks, and 18 town houses.

In July the shop invited all residents to a champagne reception to celebrate its sixth birthday. Bow Quarter itself is 10 years old, a mixed community which has managed to survive several near-death experiences.

In the late Eighties, the developer Kentish Homes had a great idea: bring New York-style loft and factory living to London in a historically and architecturally distinct building in an affordable part of town. However, following the recession, Kentish Homes went belly up with debts of more than £20m.

In came the receivers, mostly in the form of KPMG's Roger Oldfield. "When I arrived, Bow Quarter was a building site, and about 100 people had exchanged contracts. They wanted out, and they claimed that the brochure had deceived them. But the brochure didn't contain architectural drawings. They hadn't bought off-plan. They bought off an artist's lifestyle drawings."

The brochure depicted an outdoor swimming-pool and an ice rink, but Oldfield notes that this was artistic licence, not elements of a contract.

Rumours spread that we were going to put a prison and a hospital on the grounds," says Oldfield. "The tenants formed the Bow Quarter Action Group and, to avoid having to complete, they fought to [make] the project fail. We produced our own brochure. We upgraded to put in a pool and gym."

The case reached the High Court, which decided in the receiver's favour. The flats were built in one section of the factory, and under a new developer, London Buildings, the remaining flats were constructed and sold.

Three show-flats in three distinct styles were created, including Andrew Logan's upside-down ceiling sculpture of a naked couple frolicking on Astroturf. Marketing of the Bow Quarter was similarly inventive. The marketing guru George Kozlowski's London Underground advertising campaign included more nudity and a promise of subsidised mortgages.

The Astroturf gimmick attracted press attention, and the allure of free money promised by the Tube cards hooked the architect Martin Crowley: "I got nearly ten grand in subsidy," he recalls. "I was nearly 60, but I was a first-time buyer." For Crowley, the subsidy made



Bryant & May's old match factory was converted into residential flats

the difference between buying and just looking. The basic residential unit in the Bryant & May buildings is long, narrow and tall. The architect Oliver Richards, who had been with the project for a short time at the beginning and was brought back in by London Buildings, designed the remaining flats to be open-plan, spread across two and three units.

Martin Crowley's flat is on the top floor and, like all fifth-floor flats, is triple height, with a balcony. "It is a real community," he says. "It is secure, and we live according to rules. Although I had six years of negative equity, I've been here ever since, and I'm going out feet first."

Some residents live, love and leave. Roger Black is a former architect and project manager who worked on as well as lived in Bow Quarter for five years. "Our apartment was designed for young people. It had a young atmosphere about it. It became tiresome. It was also a bit far out of town for us. We are now in Bloomsbury."

Mr Kozlowski similarly notes the youthfulness of the place: "Properties are not expensive. You are not just paying for a roof over your head; part of the attraction is its almost college campus atmosphere. Bow Quarter is great for people who are young, single and eager. If you are looking for a place that boozes, this is it."

A one-bedroom flat with balcony and car space sells for £80,000, and two bedrooms command closer to £135,000. Many tenants are renters.

Bow Quarter has a swimming-pool and a fitness centre, a bar, a 24-hour controlled entry security lodge and communal satellite TV and laundry rooms. The original buildings are listed, including a water tower now containing a five-level flat. The residents collectively own the Bryant & May freehold. A single agent manages the development for both freeholders.

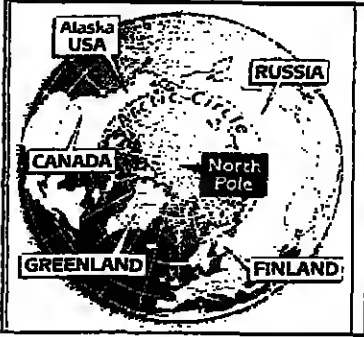
For residents generally, the worst is probably over. Mr Kozlowski surmises: "It was built in fits and starts. I'm pleasantly relieved and flattered it survived. It could have been a major disaster. As it is, it's a major success story."

Bow Quarter Residents Management, Fairfield Road, London E3 3UP (0181-983 0078)

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HOT SPOT THE NORTH POLE

Des res includes on-site parking for eight reindeer



EVERY YULETIDE, one of the coldest regions on earth is a hot spot - the North Pole. Only one property exists at the Pole itself, and although it is far from lavish, it is a large and interesting piece of real estate which, should it ever come on to the market, is sure to attract considerable interest.

The occupier is an elderly man who would seem ripe for joining the bungalow brigade. Managing director of his own global delivery firm, he is corpulent well into the red zone, and his job is physically punishing, even though he works only one day a year. He nevertheless seems determined to see his lease out, even though it still has about 550 years to run.

The property itself contains - in estate agent terminology, comprises - a massive workshop, ample staff accommodation and on-site parking for a minimum of eight reindeer.

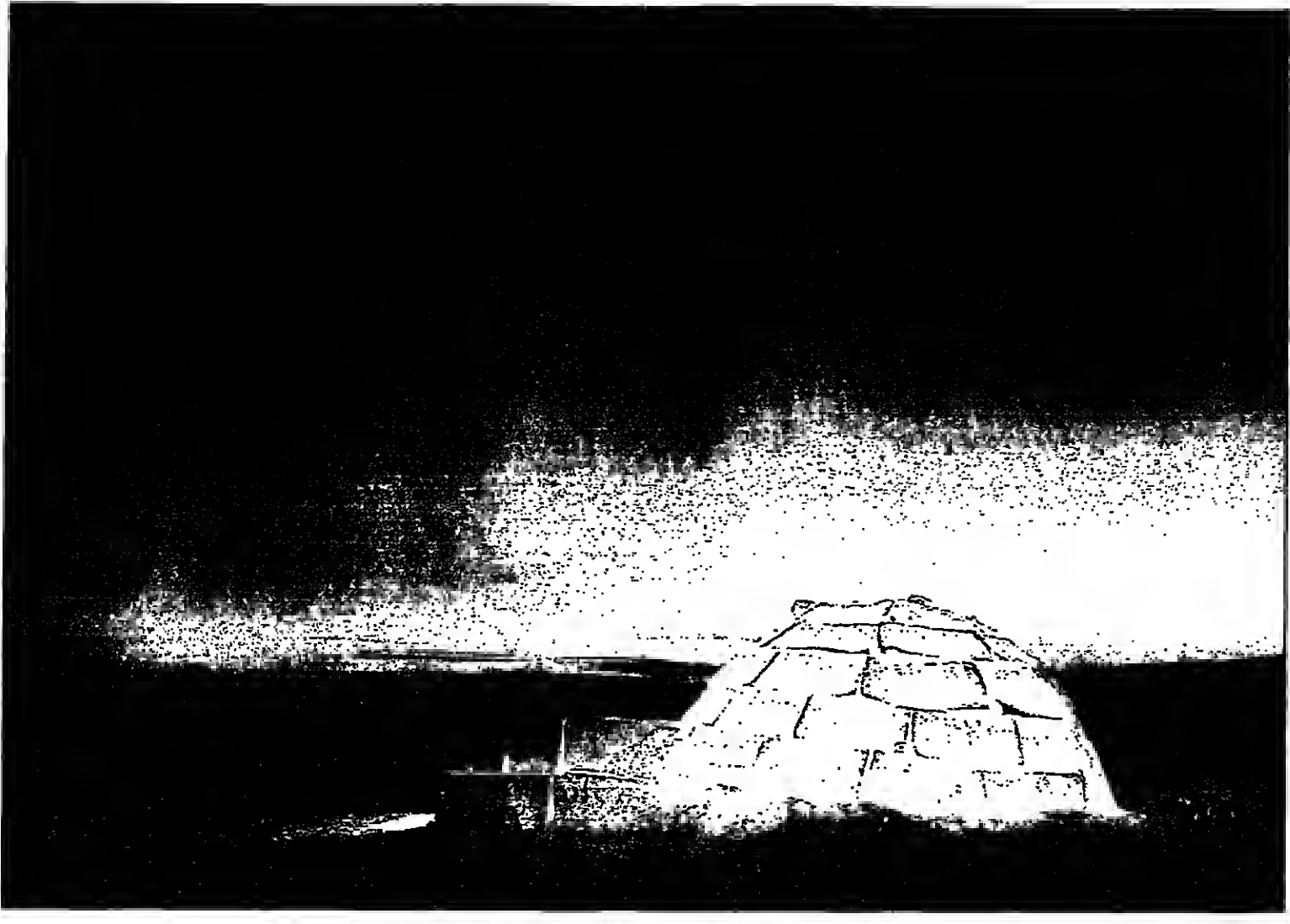
The lease contains a highly unusual restrictive covenant. These covenants generally prohibit work altogether or strictly limit the kind of work that may take place in a property, but these premises must be used as a workshop producing children's toys. This highly unusual covenant is the notorious sanity clause.

Several countries claim the property. The Arctic Circle includes parts of America (Alaska division), Canada, Greenland, Finland, and Russia.

Santa's familiar red and white are the national colours of Canada. Danish children address their letters to the "Julemanden" in Greenland, and receive replies.

In fact, Santa replies to children from many countries. Erja Tikka, press counsellor at the Finnish Embassy, says: "These other countries don't have reindeer, and our Santa post office receives 700,000 letters a year, so Finland has clearly won that competition."

Try telling that to the Canadians. Lynne Boyer of Canada's Office of



There's no place like it for a guaranteed white Christmas - the problem is persuading Santa to sell

World Pictures

Strategic Communications Planning, notes: "The North Pole is on Canadian territory, so Santa is, technically, a Canadian citizen."

In Finnish Lapland, Mr Claus maintains an office, complete with Web server and Internet address, at Napapiiri, near Rovaniemi, and he makes daily appearances in nearby Korvatunturi. This part of Finland has abundant ice and snow but is hardly the most northerly of Finnish towns and villages and, for nearness to the North Pole, might as well be in Ecuador.

Canada's northern territories are also closer to the Pole and contain a huge swathe of government-owned land ideal for squatters. The Canadian High Commissioner has revealed,

almost exclusively to *The Independent*, instructions for building an igloo based on Inuit building practices.

For starters, says the helpful information sheet, you need plenty of snow and, rail officials in Britain will be heartened to learn, preferably the right type of snow - crunchy and hard-packed.

The blocks are laid down in a spiral shape, and the entire structure's strength depends on the placement of the final block at the tip. Large families can be accommodated in several igloos connected by passageways.

Crucially, "the best location is beside a gently sloping hill." Even for igloos, location is everything.

ROBERT LIEBMAN

LOWDOWN

Transport: The world's most northerly railway line is at Ny Alcsund, Norway. Otherwise, transport goes to the dogs. South-facing gardens? At the North Pole, they all are. Council tax: For 1998/1999, Band A: Frankincense. Band H: Myrrh. "No, it's not my vanity number plate": The correct postal code for Father Christmas in the United Kingdom is SANTAL, and in

Canada it is HOH HOH. His Finnish website address is <http://www.santaclausoffice.fi>. Furs R Us: Shopping options are limited. When winter arrives there is not much to do except wait six months for summer and daylight to return. Otherwise, the Arctic has waterfalls, geysers, sulphur, mud and mineral pools, dog-sledge races and the Northern Lights. Rovaniemi is a winter sports resort.

THREE TO VIEW WITH TWO BEDROOMS



THE GRAIN Store is part of a development of an old village farm in Acol, near Birchington in Kent. At the entrance to the former farmyard, the Grade II, weather-boarded grain store has been converted into a two-bedroom home that has bags of character.

It has a 19ft 5in sitting room with vaulted ceiling, stripped wooden floor and period-style radiators. The kitchen is irregularly shaped, fitted with modern units, and has a built-in oven and hob and a wooden floor. There will be parking for two cars. The asking price is £85,000 through GW Finn & Sons 101304 6121471.



THIS OLD terraced cottage, called Starboard, is just yards from the tidal waters of Stoehouse Pool, near Plymouth, and is thought to have been built as servants' quarters for a big estate in 1798. It later became a sailmaker's premises. Now a two-bedroom home, it has a sitting room, dining room and 24ft kitchen on the ground floor, with a further sitting room on the first floor, with views over the water. The main bedroom on the second floor has a high ceiling with exposed roof trusses. Outside there's a rear walled garden and a garage. £93,000 through Punch & Roche (01752 267477).

SHIPWRIGHT'S COTTAGE

in Salcombe, south Devon, is the kind of cottage you dream about when stuck in the city on a dreary winter's day. The renovated, early-19th-century, three-storey house has views across the estuary and the beaches, and is almost in front of the starting line for dinghy racing. The white-painted cottage has a bedsitting room on the ground floor, with window seat and storage under, and a recessed wardrobe. On the first floor there's a 11ft 9in sitting room with views over the water; stone fireplace and exposed ceiling beams. The second bedroom is on the second floor along with en suite shower rooms. Offers over £175,000 to Marchand Petit (01548 844473).

ROSALIND RUSSELL

STEPPING STONES

A WRITER'S PROPERTY STORY



CHILDREN'S WRITER Lorna Read has bought seven properties since 1979. For her first purchase, Lorna plumped for a first-floor flat opposite a pickle factory in Ealing which cost £16,000.

Lorna soon found her patience stretched by a barman neighbour who "played bongo drums until dawn". In 1983, she sold for £24,000 and moved on to a two-up, two-down in west Ealing for £35,000.

Three years later, after "a broken live-in romance and daily hell beneath Concorde's flight path" Lorna sold for £59,000 and, for the same price, bought a one-bedroom flat in Belsize Park. Within days it was back on the market: "I found myself living beneath 'the elephants'."

A year later Lorna sold for £75,000 and bought a tiny one-bed attic flat in Hampstead. Here she "churned out several novels" in three years.

The Northern Line at the bottom of the garden proved a disruption, though, and in 1990 she sold for £94,000, moving up to a brand new house in a cul-de-sac in Crouch End for £160,000. Unruly neighbours made her regret this purchase and a year later she sold for £140,00, moving the next

year to a £118,000 maisonette with roof terrace in Dartmouth Park. Five years later Lorna made what she describes as her second big mistake: "I'd passed 50 and yearned for a detached suburban house." She paid £165,000 for a property in Uxbridge but, just two weeks later, Lorna's dream turned into a nightmare of "boredom and belish late night journeys home from London".

Last September she sold for £168,000, and is currently looking for a house in north London.

GINETTA VEDRICKAS

THOSE MOVES

IN BRIEF

1979 - bought Ealing flat for £16,000, sold for £24,000.
1983 - bought Ealing cottage for £35,000, sold for £59,000.
1986 - bought Belsize Park flat for £59,000 sold for £75,000.
1987 - bought Hampstead attic for £75,000, sold for £94,000.
1990 - bought Crouch end house for £160,000, sold for £140,00 in 1991.
1992 - bought Dartmouth Park flat for £118,000, sold for £160,000.
1997 - bought Uxbridge detached for £165,000, sold for £168,000 later that year.

Bedroom, bathroom, wine store - a cellar can add a whole new room to your life. By Gwenda Joyce-Brophy

It's dark, underground - and would like to enter your home

WHEN STUART Jones, an estate agent with Westminster Properties, recently inspected a cellar in a north-west London property, he expected to find the all-too-common dark, dank, rubbish-strewn area. Instead, he discovered a fully-equipped, hi-tech studio - the owner was a member of a band who had put the cellar to productive use.

Stephen Elliot of the Basement Development Group (BDG), would be impressed. The organisation promotes the use and development of the under-utilised space below ground. "At the very least, a cellar is a great storage resource," he says, "particularly in these minimalist times."

Resourceful cellar owners have been turning their cellar into a den, or an extra bedroom for guests. "We have seen quite a few examples of cellars being used in this way," says Nick Goble of the estate agents Winkworths in Battersea. It is, unsurprisingly, more common in one-bedroom flats, where extra space is at a premium. "In many cases though, the owners have not tanked the cellar properly."

Chris Evans, a development control manager at Bromley Borough Council, advises writing to your local authority with any plans early on, particularly if there is likely to be any structural change - a term which can cover merely installing a window. "Any work will need to comply with building regulations," he says.

The BDG produces several documents aimed at builders or rehabilitation specialists, which give advice and specifications for the basic through to what Mr Elliot terms "pukka" conversions. "You can intro-

duce internal waterproofing, or incorporate additional ventilation and/or dehumidification," he says. However, Mr Elliot warns of getting carried away: "You need to consider carefully the practicality of any work you do, as well as the cost. Finding out whether improvements in thermal performance or habitability, for example, can be achieved within your budget, is crucial."

While the word "cellar" is one that makes the eyes of many a buyer light up, it should not make pound signs

bash. "We have had several properties where the cellar has been made into a bathroom," says Lisa Keating of Bushells estate agents in Clapham. However, taking into account the costs of tanking, tiling etc., there is clearly no large profit involved, putting around £5,000 on the price of a £120,000 flat. Nick Goble of Winkworths is cautious about such usage. "Downstairs bathrooms are out popular," he says, "and you have the difficulty of ensuring adequate ventilation in a cellar."

For many people, however, it is the opportunity of having a "real" wine cellar that lies in their yearning for a cellar. "When I bought this flat, I had looked at several properties, but it was the cellar that clinched the decision to buy it," says Nicholas Richards who lives in east London. "I love having a wine collection maturing in the cellar. 'Wine cellar' has a certain social cachet about it, and a well maintained one may impress future buyers."

"One of the most impressive cellars I have seen was a wine cellar in a Victorian two-bedroom flat in Brondesbury," recalls Westminster's Stuart Jones. "The owners were serious wine lovers, so they knew all about temperature, light, and humidity control - and having no strong smells nearby. Usually I am tripping over half-used cans of paint and other chemicals in cellars, but this one was in pristine condition."



The converted cellar can be put to all sorts of uses

maintain a constant, appropriate temperature within your existing cellar, "although you need to insulate the cellar", says Norcool's Christine Martin. "We can do this, or provide the necessary information for people to carry out the work themselves."

Even those in upper-floor, centrally heated apartments, need no longer be deprived of the joys of a cellar. Norcool will install a cool, moist "cellar" for storing and maturing wines almost anywhere in your property.

But will turning your spare bedroom into a giant fridge mean you are subjected to loud humming that keeps you awake at night? Apparently not. "The cooling unit has been designed

to be low-noise", says Ms Martin. And if a future buyer doesn't share your enthusiasm for your "upstairs cellar", you can remove the units and doors and take them with you.

Basement Waterproofing Design Guide, co-sponsored by the British Cement Association and the British Structural Waterproofing Association, is available from the Basement Development Group. 01344 762676; Federation of Master Builders. 0171-242 7583; Norcool Appliances Ltd. 01302 751223. Door kits cost £250-500, and refrigeration units around £1,200. Winkworths estate agents, 0171-228 9265



Despite dire predictions from the likes of George Soros, fears of another Thirties-style Depression have so far proved unfounded

Stock markets will get a reality check, but when?

Now that the turkey is safely under the belt, and thoughts are starting to turn to the prospects of the New Year, it seems an appropriate time to ask the question that most stock-market followers have been asking for some months: can the market in 1999 avoid the serious setback that so briefly, but dramatically, threatened in the course of late summer 1998?

As it turns out, rather like 1987, when historians come to look back on the charts for 1998, the crisis of the summer will appear merely as a significant blip, not as a serious or enduring dislocation. Both the US and UK markets look like ending the year showing comfortable gains of around 10-15 per cent, just as 1987 ended with the markets showing a modest rise, despite the great cataclysm in October of that year.

It means that there have now only been two years in the last 20 in which shares have not shown a positive total return, a quite remarkable record of sustained success by historical standards. Just as remarkable has been the continued strong performance of gilts, which in an era of declining inflation are now firmly back in the fold of respectable mainstream assets.

Gilts were the strongest performing asset class in 1998, just as they were in 1997 – and in fact have more than matched the performance of equities over the course of the 1990s, with a string of double-digit total returns. (Who would have thought a few years ago that we would have lived to see the much maligned War Loan selling at 76p in the pound, as it was this week?)

When it comes to looking forward, however, some now all-too-familiar doubts keep crowding in. The IMF, in its latest forecast out this week, specifically identified the risk of a stock market correction as one of the five most important risks hanging over the world economy. I have yet to meet a sensible or thoughtful professional investor who does not recognise the force of that concern. Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, has demonstrated his remarkable ability to sustain the



JONATHAN DAVIS
It will not be surprising if 1999 does at last see the down year in the US and UK stock markets

confidence of the markets through the liquidity crisis of the summer. But his balancing act cannot continue forever without the risk of another serious mishap.

Knowing that the markets are fundamentally overvalued, but worried at the same time about avoiding a painful collision with reality, Greenspan's problem is that every time he succeeds in deflating one crisis, he merely recreates the problem that exercised him in the first place – which is the risk that an overinflated stock market will create a consumer boom that can only end in tears, just as the property boom of the late 1980s did.

With the world economy having slowed dramatically, and a spate of

warnings from leading US companies seemingly having little effect on Wall Street, there is every sign that the stock market there is indeed entering a period of unsustainable divorce from reality. A price/earnings ratio of 24 is making an awful lot of positive assumptions about future profits performance, which sit very uncomfortably with the trend of earnings downgrades.

Andrew Smithers, the fund management consultant, observes that, as usual in economics, the issue is not whether but when the stock market correction takes place. The timing cannot be predicted with confidence – and it may take some time yet – but that it will in due course happen is inevitable. It need not be the end of the world, but it could still be quite nasty.

The dilemma for investors in the meantime is what they are to do about it: only a fool will want to avoid enjoying the fruits of the good times while they last, but at the same time prudence suggests it would be unwise to be lulled into the feeling that the stock market can go on delivering returns of 20 per cent a year indefinitely.

Admittedly, there are some consolations around. I note that George Soros, whose public pronouncements I have always found to be an invaluable contrarian indicator, has published a book warning that global capitalism is in serious crisis.

He describes the current bounceback in markets as a "false dawn" that could be followed by "a profound bear market."

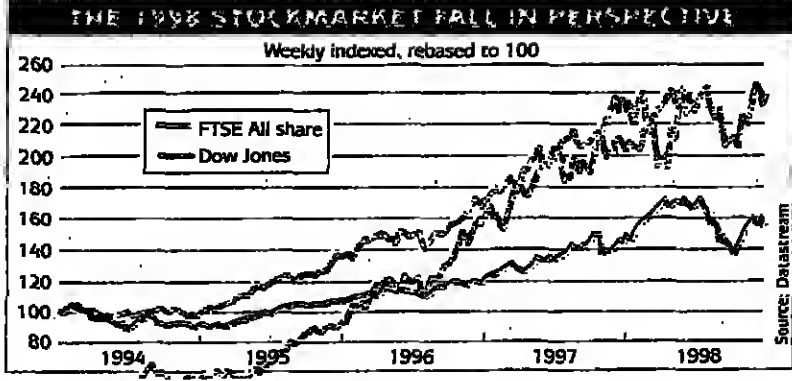
just as in the 1930s and in Asia currently". If he thinks that things are so bad, then maybe we are indeed poised to live through an economic miracle. The Economist, which also tends to be right about things, but far too early (it has been predicting \$10 a barrel of oil since around 1985), thinks that the market is now so overvalued that it no longer makes sense to assume automatically that the stock market is still the best long-term home for savings – an assumption that has become an accepted part of conventional wisdom in the US and, to a lesser extent, over here.

These are all sombre warnings from clever people. The fact is, however, that the great market setback has been predicted with great regularity for at least three years and has yet to happen. Seeing the experts confounded is an enduring and innocent source of pleasure.

It is clear that most of the gloomy market pundits have relied too heavily on the assumption that the market will in time revert to its traditional valuation parameters. They have overlooked the powerful specific forces (which include demographics and co-ordinated disinflationary policies) that have helped to keep this phase of the bull market going for so long. All bull markets, we have long been told, must climb a wall of worry, and this one has proved its credentials in spectacular fashion.

But it would be a mistake to say: "To hell with the pundits, and let's just go with the flow." A couple of months ago I asked Barton Biggs, the highly respected market strategist at Morgan Stanley, what he thought would happen to the markets following Greenspan's latest interest-rate cut.

His view was that "the Fed has panicked". The market would inevitably bounce back strongly till the end of the year, he thought, before reality finally set in one last time. I fear that this time he may be right. Making market forecasts is, as I have frequently pointed out, a mug's game, but I am going to be brave and say that I will not be surprised if 1999 does at last see the down year in the US and UK stock markets that so many have forecast for so long. It will, I hasten to add, be a pleasure to be proved wrong.



The year of the Net

SO WERE you dreaming of an Internet Christmas? The hype from the United States claims more spending on Christmas presents this festive season by Americans over the Internet than across shop counters. That I find difficult to believe. But believe this: 1998 has been the year that the Internet came of age.

In January, the first ever online mortgage offer was launched by the broker, Paragon Mortgages. Internet insurance policies became commonplace, with more than a dozen sites offering travel insurance policies and a handful providing motor and household insurance.

Electronic banking has taken off after much hype over the past 12 months. Barclays Bank has an off-Web operation, its own PC banking intranet, while the UK pioneer of Web-based banking, the Nationwide Building Society, offered itself as an Internet service provider as well.

Royal Bank of Scotland,



INTERNET INVESTOR
ROBIN AMLÖT

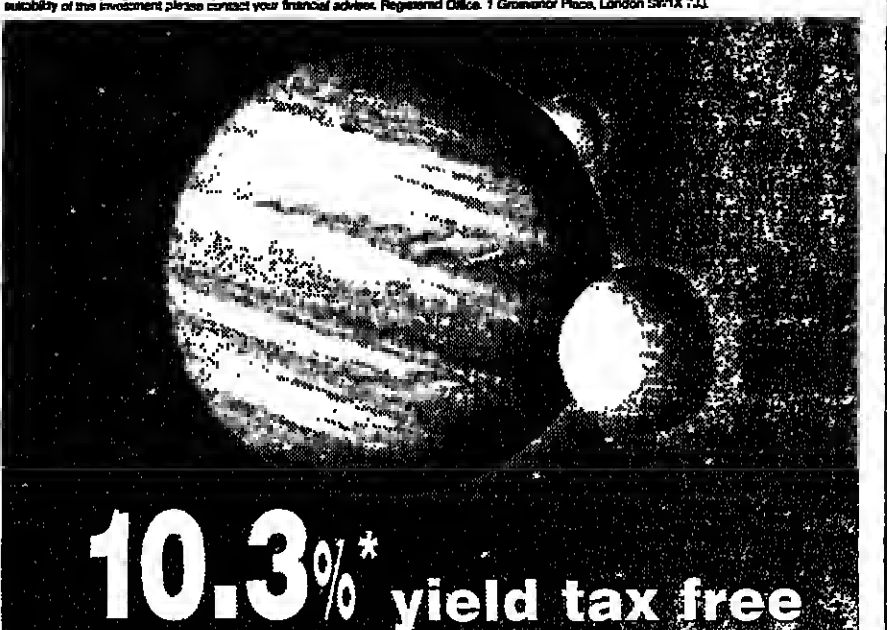
Citibank, Co-operative Bank, the Prudential, Norwich & Peterborough Building Society and Lloyds all made significant moves on the Net. The net result of all this activity, if you like, is that around half a million of us now use the Internet or an intranet to manage our money.

Investing in shares via the Internet lags – at least in the UK, where our savings culture is not so directly focused on the equity market as in the US.

There, stockbroker Charles Schwab says its Internet dealings hit a record of 121,000 trades in a day in November. In the UK, take-up has not been as swift, partly because the supposed benefits of Web trading – significantly lower costs – have yet to be passed on to individual customers. Nevertheless, a significant development of direct electronic trading occurred when Charles Schwab completed the first deal with a fully automated Web trade going through at 9.11am on 14 December.

The new "straight through" system allows individual investors to buy and sell shares via direct computer links. Previously, all Web-based broking services were really just glorified e-mail offerings. In future, individual investors will be able to execute buy-and-sell orders at "best price" and place their own limit orders.

Robin Amlot can be reached at RobinAmlot@aol.com



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TRAVEL

INDEPENDENT ADVICE FOR THE INDEPENDENT TRAVELLER:
FROM THE ONLY NATIONAL NEWSPAPER TRAVEL SECTION THAT REFUSES FREE TRIPS

The insiders' guide to 1999

What were the best travel discoveries of 1998, and where should you be going next year? By Caroline Murphy

For travellers and the travel industry alike, 1998 has proved a momentous year. While the World Cup disrupted travel in our favourite foreign country, France, British Airways sold two million flights in a weekend at absurdly low prices. The travel industry consolidated, so that much of it is now in the hands of a few huge companies, while the small specialists extended their tentacles into ever more exotic territory. For the soundest advice from the travel experts, we asked intrepid explorers and industry insiders for their best travel discovery of 1998 – and their top travel tip for 1999.

"My favourite place in 1998 was Mato Grosso in the Amazon. It's an amazing bit of forest, really beautiful – and it still has lots of jaguars and turtles. For me what is so exciting is that this was where Colonel Fawcett disappeared. He was the explorer who set out to look for a city of gold. It might even still be there!

"For 1999 I'd recommend going to Mongolia. There's nowhere in the world that is so nomadic, almost half the population lives in tents. But not for much longer, since the country is opening up quickly. Get there before the nomads settle down like the rest of us."

Benedict Allen, explorer and author of 'Edge of Blue Heaven'

"1998 was the year I discovered the roller-coaster in a Las Vegas hotel called New York New York. Go to the top of the skyscraper and hurtle down for the scariest ride of your life."

"My tip for a great holiday in 1999 is to buy your holiday now. Travel agents will be trying to breathe some life into the flagging retail market by pushing silly bargains after Christmas."

Jeremy Stidmore, editor of 'Travel Weekly' newspaper

"My best travel discovery of 1998 was without a doubt the Sierra Madre mountains in northern Mexico. The canyons are staggeringly deep and quite tourist-free."

"At the Tsodilo Hills in the Botswana desert – the sacred site of the hushmen – I literally stumbled into a new camp being established by a guy called Andy MacGregor. It's the perfect place to see in the millennium."

Martin Buckley, traveller and writer

"1998 for me was the year I could both stand and sit in a Chinese bus. I spent three days in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, using buses extensively. Normally I found a comfortable seat and if I did not, I could still stand without stooping although I am 6ft 5in. Prices may have gone up, from 4p to 7p in the last year, but is any traveller likely to complain?"

"1999 will be the year of indulgence for many travellers. From Moscow to Singapore, luxury hotels are slashing their prices to encourage tourists to take the place of the now bankrupt business travellers up front. Recessions are good news for travellers – take advantage of them whilst they last."

Neil Taylor, of the specialist tour operator Regent Holidays

"My best discovery of 1998 was Turkish Cyprus. It is beautiful and both the people and the magnificent sites are untouched by the nastier aspects of tourism. The people are wonderfully trusting and all those ancient places appear unmanaged."

"My top tip for next year would be to visit Canada: in particular, go to Manitoulin Island on the Great Lakes. North American Indians make up one-third of the island's present population and the place takes its name from one of their great gods. It is the world's largest freshwater island and the perfect spot for water-based activities – what's more, if you go in early August you



Amathous in Northern Cyprus is untouched by the nastier aspects of tourism

Robert Harding

may catch the annual three-day festival at which Indian dancing groups from all over Ontario perform."

Susan Griffith, editor of 'Work Your Way Around the World'

"This year Watchdog put holiday building sites firmly on the agenda. Now tour companies are getting their acts together to let holidaymakers know in advance that the hotel they booked may be surrounded by JCBs, stone-cutters and drills. All the tour operators have to do is find those affected customers equivalent places to stay once they've admitted there are building works. Therein lies the rub. Some tour companies will insist the customer pay

extra for a better-class hotel or else settle for a three-star instead of the (noisy) four-star they originally wanted, and indeed, booked up to a year in advance."

"Watchdog's tip for the traveller in 1999 is don't lose or have your passport stolen between leaving home and boarding the plane. Apart from the fact that you won't get on the flight, one Watchdog viewer found out the hard way that her travel insurance wouldn't pay back the price of her subsequently cancelled holiday. The way her travel insurance is underwritten assumes that the passport would be lost or stolen abroad and not in the UK."

Helen O'Rahilly, editor of 'Watchdog' and 'Weekend Watchdog'

"My travel discovery of 1998 is undoubtedly the Mani peninsula in Greece, because there you find a timeless, ancient world in a modern setting."

"1999 is my 25th anniversary of writing and publishing travel guides, so my tip has to be buy a good guide book and then find places the author doesn't know about – that's the real adventure."

Hilary Bradt, writer, tour leader and publisher

"The best thing about 1998 was the improvement in agrotourism in Romania. Village homestay schemes became better organised and far more widely available. Since the revolution everyone's been say-

ing that the great things about Romania are the people and the villages. 1998 is the year that they have finally got it together, thank God!"

"1999 will be the year of Berlin. With the federal government moving in and the accompanying building scheme being implemented on a grand scale, Berlin'll be fantastic."

Tim Burford, guidebook writer

"My discovery this year was Budapest, a fantastic city, full of atmosphere, and in a great situation with the river running through it."

"My top tip for 1999 would be taking the recently opened high-speed train link from

London to Berlin to see how Germany's new capital is shaping up. And all this comfortably in a day."

Brendan Fox, editor, Thomas Cook timetables

"My travel discovery of 1998 was San Pedro de Atacama in the Atacama desert in Chile. The desert scenery is spectacular and there is loads to do. It's not far from the Valle de la Luna."

"Remember in 1998 that a number of insurance policies don't cover travel in areas like Chile, for which the Foreign Office has issued an advisory warning against non-necessary travel. Unscrupulous travel agents may not warn you that your travel

Our man in Havana (well, eventually...)

THE LAST time Cuba's national airline suffered a fatal accident was in August, on take-off from Quito in Ecuador. At the time, I explained that Cubana was the most dangerous airline for which reliable records exist – but reiterated my confidence in aviation safety standards by adding that I had bought a ticket on the airline to Havana for my Christmas holiday.

The good news: Tuesday's flight to Havana departed only three hours late and arrived safely. The bad news: a number of independent travellers who'd been hoping to spend the festive season in Cuba were not on board. Shortly before departure, we had our reservations cancelled by the airline.

A fortnight ago, the travel agent – Journey Latin America – called me to say that Cubana had cancelled all independent travellers' flight plans. Rather than repeat the sort of overbookings that have been revealed in these pages and on

the BBC's weekend *Watchdog*, the airline took a close look at its bookings over Christmas and decided to reduce the pressure on its planes.

Cubana says that the way it did this was to ask the agent to confirm a batch of bookings, by issuing tickets and placing the ticket number in the reservations system. The airline claims that Journey Latin America failed to respond in time, and the reservations were duly cancelled.

The agent provides evidence, in the form of print-outs from the Amadeus computer reservations system, that appears to show that bookings had been cancelled with no warning.

For the punter, perhaps the most maddening aspect is that because of a loophole in consumer protection legislation, neither the airline nor the agent has any liability beyond that of returning the cash paid (without interest).

The lesson to be learnt from

this Christmas kerfuffle is that the paying customers who got the chop were those who had booked only a flight. In an age when travellers are finally getting the consumer protection they deserve, you might imagine that we grounded travellers are entitled to some compensation for having our Christmas plans jeopardised.

To avoid finding yourself in the same position as me, whenever you book a flight, book something else at the same time through the agent that sells you the ticket. This can be as modest as a single night at a hotel, or a day's car rental. Legally, this converts your air ticket into a package – and instantly the provisions of the Package Travel Regulations come into effect. These give passengers redress if a holiday is cancelled shortly before departure. But if you have booked only a flight, then all you can do is hope that the agent will help you find some other way of getting to your destination.



SIMON CALDER

Christmas Eve in Havana? Instead, I was checking in at Heathrow at 4.35am

Even so close to Christmas, Journey Latin America somehow managed to find space on an alternative flight on the French airline Air Outre Mer. But it meant losing the first two days of the trip, then flying out in the small hours of 24 December and seven hours of hanging around at Orly airport in Paris to change

planes. If you happened to be checking in at Heathrow at 4.35am on Christmas Eve, I hope I wasn't too grumpy.

ON MONDAY morning, Britain's travel agents will begin to earn the annual battle for the hearts and credit cards of holiday-makers.

In your local high street you can expect some good discount deals on summer 1999 holidays, without the old catch of having to buy overpriced insurance – the Government outlawed this technique last month. So take advantage of all the current competition between travel agents, and shop around.

One agency you won't find on the high street is Carlson Wagonlit, because it is a purely business travel agent. Six months ago, the company won the lucrative BBC account – and triggered an extraordinary amount of correspondence in the Beeb's in-house journal, *Ariel*. "My cat could have come up

with a better offer," complains one hard-pressed staff member – just part of the half-page tirade about Carlson Wagonlit in a recent issue. "I asked for a return flight, Heathrow to Amsterdam, leaving Wednesday, returning Thursday. They could pick times and flights." The company quoted £260; the prospective passenger found a fare of £70 elsewhere – and he took it.

Another unhappy customer is the radio presenter (and contributor to these pages) Nicola Barranger. She had to travel to Vienna for an important interview, at a time when the Austrian capital was hosting a conference of 20,000 cardiologists. (And what should the collective noun for such a gathering be: a ventricle? a pulse? a Valentine?)

"I headed for the Hotel Imperial where I had a ticket for a 2,300 schilling [about £115] room. The room was in keeping with the name of the hotel, but

when the huttler appeared, I got worried. 'Yes, we did confirm with Carlson that you wanted the 23,000-schilling room,' said young Heidi on the front desk. The room I was booked into at the licence-payer's expense cost a mere £1.15 a night – not including breakfast."

Ms Barranger managed to extricate herself from the Imperial and found an alternative that was a lot less likely to give licence-payers heart failure. "The full version of my Carlson Wagonlit cock-up I now reserve for dinner parties only," she says.

ST PETERSBURG has been voted the world's best party city by the staff of British Airways. In a survey in *High Life* magazine, the airline's employees rated it above Madrid, Dublin and New York. And the hottest venue in Russia's second city? The Valhalla bar, where customers are given free use of Viking tunics and helmets.



Cowboy culture is alive and well in the wide-open spaces of Wyoming (above); Antarctica is least touched and fastest endangered by global warming (right); the great attractions of Romania are the people and the villages – such as Botiza in Maramuresh (below)
Robert Harding

insurance policy is invalidated if your destination is so designated. Check before you go that you are fully covered.
Chris Farrott, tour operator, Journey Latin America

"In 1998 I discovered that cowboy culture is alive and well in Wyoming. And then I also discovered that you should never ask a cowboy to take off his hat – his hair will almost inevitably be all flat and greasy underneath!"

"In 1999 go to Cuba for fantastic music and architecture. The place is in a time warp and has a unique vitality. Sooner or later the US embargo is bound to be lifted and the danger is that Cuba will turn into just another Florida."

Lyn Hughes, editor of 'Wanderlust' magazine

"Global warming all over the world was one of the significant themes of 1998, so Antarctica was the place to go, because it is the location both the least touched and fastest endangered by that threat. This was a year that also saw a travel explosion on the Web, with companies like On-Line providing myriad different ways of accessing travel information."

"The places to go to in 1999 are all very strange. Go to Panama before the American flag comes down at the end of the year, or to Macao before it is handed back – also at the end of the year. For a taste of millennium fever South Pacific style, try Kiribati, although be warned that all the South Pacific islands have announced that they don't have the facilities to meet the anticipated influx of millennium travellers. I, on the other hand, intend to do all my travelling early in the year and to see in the mil-



lennium – bug and all – in a rare Christmas in Britain.
Sarah Miller, editor of 'Condé Nast Traveller' magazine

"1998 saw the rediscovery of Croatia as a popular holiday destination. From nowhere, the *Nelles Guide to Croatia and the Adriatic Coast* suddenly began to sell in large quantities. 1999 will see an increasing trend for Croatia as a holiday destination and a number of new guides are due to come out then."

"On 11 August there will be a total eclipse of the sun and the place to go to see

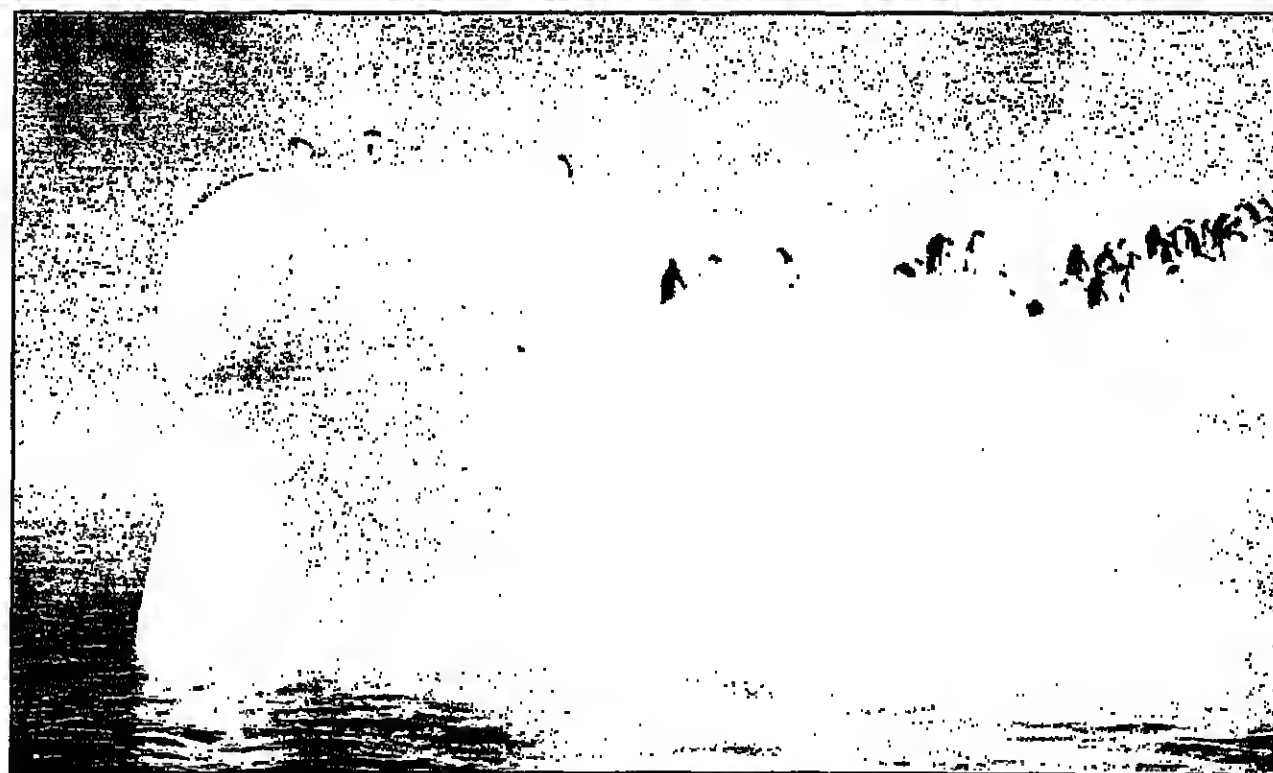
this happen is Cornwall – if you can still find any accommodation. The must-have guides are *The Royal Greenwich Observatories' Total Eclipse of the Sun*, by Steve Bell, and the Varner Press's *Total Eclipse of the Sun in Cornwall and South Devon*, by Pam Hine. Both are already proving very popular.
Andrew Steed, map buyer for Stanford's

"I suppose my best discovery of 1998 was Southern American food – grits, biscuits and gravy, barbecue, burritos. I'd only dabbled with it before."

"My tip for 1999 is go to the American South, especially Austin, Texas, the best city in America besides the big ones. It has a young population and there's always something going on in one of its 50 or more music venues. Between them these cater for everything from hard-core country & western to alternative punk. It's also a great base from which to see the South, or the Third Coast as they like to call it down there."
Tim Perry, author of 'Rock & Roll Traveller UK and USA'

"My favourite discovery of 1998 was the Postbus in Scotland. It was just a wonderful experience going into the lost and hidden places of Scotland and meeting en route the brilliant post-women who run post offices from their garden sheds. The service, which operates all over the UK, exists for those people living in areas where other forms of public transport aren't available."

"My travel tip for 1999 would be to take a look at the ever-expanding Tourism Concern website (www.gn.apc.org/tourismconcern). It contains a community tourism directory which highlights those places around the world where local



and, frequently, poor people are managing to own and to control their own tourism when they lack the facilities to market it themselves.
Patricia Barnett, Tourism Concern

"My discovery of 1998 was the Caprivi Strip in the north-east corner of Namibia. It used to be a no-go zone between Angola and South Africa. I travelled there by car from Namibia's capital, Windhoek, drove down the strip itself and went south into Botswana. It was an expectation-plus-one experience, and particularly great for a birdwatcher like me."

"The trip for me in 1999 will be another

drive, this time from Australia's northern territories to its southern ones: from Darwin to Broome. It is a wonderfully wild drive which involves much planning. I shall be in search of the black grasswren, a bird found in western Australia."

Keith Betton, the Association of British Travel Agents

"In 1998 STA's best travel discovery was Laos. We had always known it was an up-and-coming destination, but this year its status was confirmed by a substantial increase in the number of bookings to go there. It is generally visited as part of a joint trip, along with Vietnam and Cambodia."

"For 1999 we would recommend Africa as the destination for the young, independent traveller. Its Ivory Coast and, indeed, much of the west, is very unexplored and, on the east coast, the Bazaruto Islands off Mozambique are particularly beautiful."
Dawn Howell, PR and promotions manager of STA Travel

"Sabaudia, a tiny town south of Rome, was my discovery of 1998 – a Fascist architecture holiday resort."

"My travel tip for 1999 is don't go to Sabaudia (I want to save it for myself).
Stephen Wood, skiing correspondent of 'The Independent'

Will you jingle along with the euro in your pocket?

Europe's new currency is launched on Friday, but travellers – and the industry – are still less than sure how to react to it. By Simon Calder

"WE'RE NOT allowed to start selling them until the start of January," the helpful lady at Thomas Cook's head office told me when I tried to buy some euro travellers' cheques this week. "The trouble is, we won't know what they're worth."

That is the problem facing not just the foreign exchange industry, but the British travelling public in January. A survey for BBC's *Money Programme* revealed that fewer than half of the respondents know what the single European currency is called. People within the travel industry are rather more clued up about the euro – but are still undecided about the benefits when it comes into being in 11 countries on Friday.

"It won't even occur to me to use the euro until it's really in full swing," says the travel photographer Geoffrey Roy. "I

travel at too short notice to think much about the currency I use. I'll just go to the bank like I always do, order, say, £50 worth of French currency, and if they ask me whether I'd rather have euros than francs, I'll probably say yes just for the fun of it. As for the old European coins, I'll take them to the bank where they can be given to charity."

Roy's change will be of value to him for at least the next three years. The euro that comes into effect on 1 January will be an intangible concept; notes and coins do not arrive for another three years. The 11 national currencies will be locked in to the rate, and therefore will be fixed against each other. Sterling will continue to float against the whole raft of currencies just as it does at the moment – but if the Deutschmark appreciates by 10 per cent against the pound, you

can be sure that everything else from the Irish punt to the Finnish markka has, too.

One way to hedge against an effective devaluation of Sterling is to purchase euro travellers' cheques – but you could just buy a consignment of French francs, or any other currency. The euro cheques could take a while to catch on when there is little perceived advantage. "I'll be avoiding the euro travellers' cheque," says Petra Shepherd, head of research for the cable and satellite station Travel Channel. "For a start, I think they'll take a long time to catch on. More importantly, I think that travellers' cheques in themselves are redundant for travel today. Most people when they travel use a hole-in-the-wall card or credit cards such as Visa and MasterCard to get cash or to make payments. I'll wait to see



The euro: What is it worth?

what happens before I use the euro, but that's a personal thing – I always wait to see how everything goes and then I join the bandwagon."

Broadcaster Fi Glover, who reports for BBC's *Travel Show*, believes that reluctance to

embrace the euro could be a British thing. "I think it'll be some time before the general public trust the euro and begin to think of it as a 'real' currency," she says. "Initially, the only people who will use the euro in any form will be business travellers, and those who are handed wads of cash by their company before they travel so that the choice of what currency they use is not really their own."

But Chris Gill, author of *Where to Ski*, believes that the new currency will quickly take hold. "Everyone will use the euro: I don't think they'll be reluctant to do so. In French supermarkets they have given prices in euros as well as in francs for ages and I think that all the countries in Europe will take the full arrival of the euro in their stride. It'll make things easier for travellers."

At present, though, the Europhile traveller who sets off on 1 January with his wallet full of the new currency and his heart full of good intentions could be thwarted. On a journey through Europe, you could end up with the same uncomfortable mix of currencies as before. Yes, you can change your 50-euro travellers' cheque for 4,300 odd Belgian francs, but when you cross into Germany, shopkeepers will not be inclined to accept the Belgian currency in lieu of marks. By the time you arrive in Italy by way of Austria you'll be jingling like Santa from all the small change.

The big change, believes Martin Moore, a travel guidebook publisher, will take place in 2002. "Until then, I think that the euro will gradually work its way into general use, as people, especially those who

travel frequently, slowly pick up the currency on their travels."

Geoffrey Roy agrees that the new currency will benefit primarily the business community. "The euro is very much a trade thing. Business will deal in euros and will be greatly facilitated by a common currency," he says. "For Joe Public, on the other hand, it'll be just one more confusing aspect of travelling in Europe."

In a spirit of easing the confusion just a little, *The Independent's* travel desk has come up with a handy mnemonic to remember the 11 countries that are in the first wave: **BAFFLING SIR** standing for Belgium, Austria, France, Finland, Luxembourg, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy and Portugal. A bottle of Euro wine to the reader who comes up with the best alternative.

هكذا من الامم

Samoaan enchanted evening

It was a blind date to remember. But that Saturday night on a South Pacific island was not what Cleo Paskal had expected



White sands and palm-fringed beaches are only part of the equation for idyllic life on the island of Samoa

Robert Harding

What's the key to living happily? Well I found one answer on the South Pacific island of Samoa. And it wasn't just the standard-issue white sands and palm fringe... With a big grin, the Chief pulled up his shirt, dropped his wrap-around skirt and said: "This represents my devotion to my village."

I stared, fascinated. He was certainly very devoted. A lacework of intricate blue-black patterns covered the Chief from mid-thigh to mid-chest. The famous Samoan tattoo.

What I had asked to prompt this Full Monte of Pealty was if traditional Samoan culture, known as the Fa'a Samoa, was still the main governing force in society. The answer was carved into the Chief's skin.

He explained that, as a young man, he went through a month's long, painful, ritual tattooing process to prove to his village that he was literally willing to endure whatever was necessary for the honour and privilege of serving them. They

must have been convinced because they then elected him as Matai, or village chief.

In Samoa, the Matai have complete control in the villages, or as my new, partially clothed, friend put it: "Whatever the Chief says goes. Whether it is right or wrong." They are lawyer, judge, jury, policeman, court reporter... you get the idea. They decide everything from how long you can grow your hair to when you pray. If you have a job that brings in cash, the money goes straight to the Matai, who redistributes it throughout the village according to need.

The laws are clear and strictly enforced. If a married man runs off with another woman, the wife's brothers get the nod from the Matai to go and "revenge". Assault a child and you'll probably soon be dead. There is practically no crime in Samoa.

It all sounded a bit oppressive, if effective. But Samoa is, after all, in the South Pacific, a region renowned for being laid-back. I asked the Matai if he could suggest anything

fun. "Ah," he said, with a slightly dodgy twinkle in his eye, "you must meet my fourth son, Tosi." And he picked up the phone and set me up on a blind date.

I was to meet Tosi that night at Margreya's show bar in the Samoan capital, Apia. It was Saturday night, and Margreya's was packed. Behind the club, there was a large patio and at the far end was a huge stage. The set was made up to look like a parody of a Polynesian Nights Spectacular. Palm trees, fake waterfall, the works.

When I arrived, the show was in full swing. Tosi was up on stage fronting a live band. He had just called up volunteers from the audience and was teaching them some

dance moves. He himself looked spectacular in a floor-length evening gown, matching high heels and full make-up.

The dance seemed to revolve around Tosi cooing the word "Bananana" and the volunteers "shaking it to the front". The audience, some of them also in full drag, was in hysterics. A raucous good time was

being had by all. Amateur anthropologist (and keen Abba fan) that I am, this led me to conclude that perhaps the Fa'a Samoa isn't all harsh rules and strict discipline. I spent a pleasurable few hours dancing to faux-Hawaiian guitar music and picking up make-up tips.

At the bar after the show, a glowing and sweaty Tosi explained that, in Samoan terms, he was a fafine, a boy-girl. He seemed a bit bemused at my curiosity and more keen on gossiping with his pals than answering my bland sociological questions.

So the next day I arranged an appointment with the Samoan Minister for Women's Affairs, Folsaga Eteavati Shon. I arrived at her office early, allowing me plenty of time to admire how well her male secretary had matched his red skirt and vermillion nail polish.

Minister Shon, a charming middle-aged woman who spent time working as a social worker in Utah, explained that: "In this culture there was never any stigma attached to effeminate boys. They are still fully

accepted in the families. It's just not as big a deal as it is in many other countries of the world."

Effeminate boys here are still seen primarily as brothers or cousins or uncles. They are not a threat to the society, so the society accepts them. But I wondered if there was a limit. I asked Secretary Shon if that acceptance extended to people who were openly homosexual. She said: "Homosexuality is not condoned by our people." There it was. That firm limit to what the society was willing to accept.

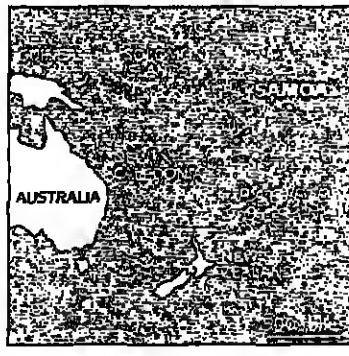
It seems that, yes, there is some social flexibility in the Fa'a Samoa, but within very clear limits. The Matai accepted and was proud of his fafine son, but had Tosi openly declared himself gay, it would have been a different matter.

In a small country like Samoa, everyone knows the rules. Some are negotiable and others aren't. And the key to living peacefully is knowing which can be overtly broken and which can't. But the key to living happily is knowing how to look fabulous in a floor-length evening gown.

FACT FILE

THE SENSIBLE airline to travel on is Air New Zealand (0181-741 2299), which serves Samoa as part of its South Pacific network. You can include Samoa on an itinerary to New Zealand or Australia for less than £1,000 return, so long as you book through a discount agent and make sure you avoid peak periods.

Cleo Paskal is presenter of a new series called *Small Worlds*, which begins today on the BBC World Service. She has spent the past four years travelling to the microstates whose entire population is outnumbered by places like Crawley. In search of Utopia in places seemingly as diverse as Iceland and Kiribati, Monaco and the Maldives. The six-part series is broadcast on Saturdays at 1.30am, Tuesdays at 9.15am and Fridays at 3.15pm.



SOMETHING TO DECLARE

NEWS FROM THE TRAVEL WORLD

Trouble spots: how travel companies deal with passenger rage

Any Time Off customer whose behaviour is (in our opinion or that of any other person in authority) causing excessive distress, damage, danger or annoyance to anyone or anyone's property will (without notice or compensation) have their Time Off holiday arrangements cancelled and Time Off's responsibility for the "customer" ceases immediately. Full cancellation charges will apply. Many hotels still respect good manners - try not to show any frustration in public, as in nearly all cases of dissatisfaction a quiet word with the person in charge will see the problem on its way to being solved. Be patient - a friendly, non-confrontational approach often goes a long way.

Time Off city selection brochure, 1999

If a passenger is upset, try to understand the psychology - they need reassurance, patience and a friendly face. They need someone to listen to their problem and, more importantly, to take action to resolve the problem. That is the only way to effectively calm people. It would be nice to stop an abusive,

shouting passenger, and to explain to them that you understand their problem. You know they are afraid of flying and that if they were to stop shouting you could make some progress with their problem. But in reality, this cannot be done. Just be nice to people. The result for you will be less stress, better job satisfaction and the thought that you made someone happy, and that you created a positive impression of Dubai International airport.

Dubai Airport Cares' magazine

A yellow-card system has been introduced by British Airways to deal with the problem of air rage. From now on, if passengers become disruptive or smoke, they will be handed a letter warning them that if they persist in their behaviour they will be liable for the cost of diverting the plane and their ticket will be invalidated for the return or onward journey.

'High Life', BA's inflight magazine

Bargain of the week

Cut-price Europe. As soon as the New Year travel peak is over, airlines face a slump in bookings. So expect some excellent deals in the first week of January from no-frills operators easyJet, Go and Ryanair. In a pre-emptive strike,



Statue of Christ, Rio de Janeiro

KLM UK (0990 074 074) is offering some absurdly good deals from its Stansted base to UK and European cities - with the added bonuses of inflight meals and the option of hooking through any travel agent. Aberdeen, Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Newcastle are each available for just £50 return, including all taxes. Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Milan and Rome come in at £70 return. You must book by midnight on 31 December, and travel by the end of

February. At least two people must travel together to qualify.

True or false?

The travel bargain of the decade is dead? A bit of both. For five years, *The Independent* has urged readers to take advantage of the airpass deal that gives the freedom of Canada for a week for less than £200. Canadian Regional Airlines is terminating the deal from Friday. But a cut-price airpass on Horizon Air still allows unlimited travel in western Canada, as well as in the US as far south as Los Angeles and east to the Rockies; book through AirPass Sales (01737 555300). A one-week pass costs £139.

Another excellent way of jetting across or around North America is on Southwest (the world's safest airline). The company sells a "Freedom Air" ticket for specified flights. These must be bought in the UK, and even though the fares rise for 1999, they are usually much lower than buying in the US. The country is divided along a line through Houston and Kansas City; journeys to the east or west cost £69 (and allow a free connection if necessary), while a coast-to-coast trip costs £99. Book on 01293 596677. A free bonus: tokens exchangeable on board will get you four beers.

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Kyoto, with more than 1,600 Buddhist temples, and 270 Shinto shrines, is still the spiritual capital of Japan. A half-day tour is included but some of the city's most fascinating parts can be easily explored on foot and there are also many optional coach tours available. The famous Bullet Train will then take you the 300 miles to Tokyo in just 2hrs 40 mins. Here a range of optional excursions are available both in the Tokyo area and further out to Mount Fuji, Lake Hakone and other popular destinations. In addition there is time for individual sightseeing and shopping in the famous Ginza area. Departure is on day 8 by early flight to Osaka to connect with Japan Airlines late morning flight to London arriving in Heathrow mid afternoon of the same day.



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NEW YEAR'S EVE TELEVISION

BBC1

- 7.00** News (594688). **7.30** Pudding Pops (573219). **7.35** Teletubbies (572256). **7.40** Yogi's Treasure Hunt (571948). **8.00** Newsround Review (542056). **8.35** Taz-Mania (503287). **9.00** Sweet Valley High (751474). **9.25** The Famine Games (753899). **9.50** Teletubbies (506696). **10.20** News (577256).
- 10.30** **FILM** *Herbie Goes Bananas* (1980). More Disney adventures starring the motivated Beetle (T) (1922).
- 12.00** **FILM** *Wipeout* (S) (571805). **12.25** Laughing for Ages (S) (546344). **1.00** News: Weather (T) (212742). **1.15** Neighbours (S) (T) (567583).
- 1.40** **FILM** *Getting Even With Dad* (1994). Kids comedy starring Macaulay Culkin (S) (T) (758614).
- 3.25** **The World's Strongest Man** (S) (T) (753898). **3.55** Boyz n the Hood (S) (T) (504259). **4.30** Blue Peter - Magic Moments (S) (T) (544868). **4.45** Neighbours (S) (T) (567583). **5.30** News: Weather (T) (257783). **5.35** Regional News (T) (257723).
- 5.40** **FILM** *Beethoven's 2nd* (1993). Big St Bernard's canine sequel (T) (524567).
- 7.00** *EastEnders* (S) (T) (59192).
- 7.45** *Jane's Cruise to the Stars*. Cruise-unknown to chart-toppers (S) (T) (526832).
- 8.30** **CHOICE** *Naked Eurovision*. Behind the scenes of the song fest. See Choice, below (S) (T) (554412).
- 9.10** *Starkey Basey: Viva Diva!* The singing legend in concert (S) (T) (504141).
- 10.00** News: Weather (T) (434508).
- 10.15** *They Think It's All Over*. (254412). **10.45** *The End of the Year Show* with Angus Deayton (S) (T) (550737). **11.40** *Dim Year Live* (S) (523444). **12.30** *Happy New Year* (S) (587997).
- 12.35** **FILM** *Carry On Columbus* (1992). Formulaic comedy (S) (T) (575343).
- 2.05** News 24 (527762). To 6.30am.

BBC2

- 6.20** **FILM** *Limelight* (1952). Charles Chaplin's swansong (T) (518003).
- 8.35** **FILM** *Come Blow Your Horn* (1963). Frank Sinatra entertains a string of ladies in this adaptation of a Neil Simon play (T) (182470).
- 10.25** **Perfectly Frank** (187696). **10.30** *The West* (S) (583551). **12.25** *Classics for Kids* (S) (723893). **1.15** *The Royal Institution Christmas Lectures* (S) (574325). **2.15** *Perfectly Frank* (S) (583551). **2.20** *Rex the Runt* (S) (525764). **2.30** *Rex the Runt* (S) (525764). **2.40** *Cambridge Folk Festival* (S) (224543). **3.20** *The Old Lady and the Pigeons* (190649). **3.45** *Video Nation - Best of 88* (S) (703582). **4.25** *Perfectly Frank* (S) (583551).
- 4.30** **FILM** *High Society* (1956). Grace Kelly's last film, a musical remake of *The Philadelphia Story* that gets by on sheer high spirits (529512).
- 6.30** *Poppa*. Continuing Monteverdi's opera about intrigue and sexual politics at Emperor Nero's court (S) (574512).
- 6.45** *Decisive Moments: Images from the News 1998*. The big news pictures of the year - and the people who took them (S) (T) (77073).
- 7.45** *Mark Lamm's New Year In*. Lamm introduces the schedule to welcome in 1999 (S) (T) (58358).
- 7.50** *New Year Horrors* (S) (T) (57764). **8.20** *Rex the Runt* (S) (525764). **8.30** *Making of Robot Wars* (S) (T) (543667). **9.05** *The Simpsons* (S) (T) (226122).
- 9.30** *A Kick up the Arse*. Kevin Turvey, Mason Boyne, Rob G. Nesbitt and other much-loved characters return in a comedy compilation (S) (T) (487969).
- 10.15** **FILM** *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975). Cult pop musical, sci-fi spoof with Tim Curry (T) (51968).
- 11.55** *Jodie's Sixth Annual Hootenanny* (S) (T) (572122). **1.15** *Best of Glasbury* '98 (S) (T) (50197). To 3am.

ITV Granada

- 6.00** **GMTV** (779141). **9.25** News (403912). **9.35** *Try Toons* (514615). **10.00** *Rocky and the Dodos* (R) (S) (702098). **10.20** *Brilliant Creatures* (T) (302122).
- 10.40** **FILM** *Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken* (1991). Disney drama with Gabrielle Anwar (57150822).
- 12.20** *Granada News* (T) (547073). **12.30** News: Weather (T) (215549).
- 12.50** **FILM** *Waterproof* (1978). Rabbits on the run in the celebrated animated film of Richard Adams' story (T) (265756).
- 2.30** *Far from the Madding Crowd* (R) (T) (23401). **4.30** *Talent of Tomorrow* (501344). **5.20** *Granada News* (T) (589885). **5.30** News (T) (507798).
- 5.40** *Emmerdale* (S) (T) (583764).
- 6.40** *Freddie Starr Show* (T) (500035).
- 7.00** *Dingles Down Under* (S) (T) (26615).
- 8.30** *The Bill* (T) (48325).
- 9.30** *The Ruth Rendell Mysteries: The Orchard Walk*. Story of brooding passion and tragedy set in 1941, starring Sylvia Sims (S) (T) (91388).
- 10.30** News: Weather (T) (404581).
- 10.45** *Stanley Baxter in Person*. An interview with the comic (531275).
- 11.45** *Happy New Year From Edinburgh Castle* (463509).
- 12.05** **FILM** *Down and Out in Beverly Hills* (1986). Richard Dreyfuss takes tramp Nick Nolte home (S) (T) (256791).
- 2.00** *Instant Replay* (54710).
- 3.00** **FILM** *George Giger* (1988). Ugly duckling Lynn Redgrave survives the Swinging Sixties (24604).
- 4.40** *TV Nightgreen* (481739). **5.05** *Hurricanes* (S) (T) (565081). **5.30** *Bugs Bunny* (753532). **5.55** News (724840). To 6am.

Channel 4

- 7.00** *Ovide* (R) (55493). **7.30** *The Magic School Bus* (R) (S) (74528). **8.00** *The Big Breakfast* (46257). **10.00** *Buzz* (49344). **10.30** *Earle, Indiana* (R) (7014). **11.00** *Madison* (S) (5561). **11.30** *Babylon 5* (58141). **12.30** *The Windrush Years* (R) (46143). **1.15** *Schumann's Lost Romance* (S) (77615). **2.10** *Schumann Cello Concerto* (788507). **2.35** *Roots to Success* (594877). **2.50** *Wine Hunt* (S) (51762). **3.45** *Top Stories* (118677). **3.50** *Fifteen to One Highlights* (515764). **4.30** *Roundabout* (525563). **4.55** *Ricki Lake* (R) (754035).
- 5.30** *Garden Doctors* (595).
- 6.00** *Riverdance - The New Show*. New steps in New York (R) (S) (788059).
- 7.10** **FILM** *The Best of Benny Hill* (1974). Rude skits (T) (108322).
- 8.30** *Heroes of Comedy*. Portrait of Benny Hill (R) (S) (T) (44957).
- 9.30** *The Greatest Rory Ever Told*. Rory Bremner gives his impressions of 1998. Highlights include a Royal Family edition of *Jerry Springer* and *Antony and Cleopatra* (S) (T) (58870).
- 10.30** *Fraser*. Fraser reveals Roz's pregnancy to her mother (R) (S) (T) (7870).
- 11.00** *Your Favourite Fraser*. Your chance to choose from four episodes (55779).
- 11.15** *TFT Friday New Year* (243306). **11.45** *Eurotrash New Year* (242677). **12.15** *Adam and Joe's Toy Movie Special* (577352).
- 1.05** **FILM** *House Party* (1990). Christopher Reid and Christopher Martin (aka rap stars KidPlay) try to organise a large rap bash (57594).
- 2.55** **FILM** *Beach Blanket Bingo* (1965). Frankie Avalon beach party. With Annette Funicello (52458).
- 4.50** *The Total Balalaika Show* (521262). **5.50** *Old Mother Hubbard* (724772). **5.55** *Abdullah and the Wonderful Lamp* (727371). To 6am.

Channel 5

- 6.00** *The Wind in the Willows* (R) (2505050). **6.25** *Roobarb* (3709665). **6.30** *Dappledown Farm* (R) (428042). **7.00** *Wimble's House* (R) (582389). **7.30** *Milkshake* (S) (226289). **7.35** *Havakazoo* (R) (S) (622702). **8.00** *George of the Jungle* (R) (7238054).
- 8.30** **FILM** *Lassie: Flight of the Cougar* (1967). Feature-length romp with the wonder dog (5919988).
- 9.50** *My Story* (5768073). **10.20** *Sunset Beach* (798603). **11.10** *Leza* (5904783). **12.00** *5 News* (723141). **12.30** *Family Affairs* (525251). **1.00** *The Bold and the Beautiful* (561697). **1.30** *Wow! Wow! Wubbzy!* (581212). **2.00** *100 Per Cent* (1132702). **2.30** *Good Afternoon* (S) (2806877).
- 3.30** **FILM** *Fort Apache* (1948). Cavalry disciplinarian Henry Fonda at odds with John Wayne (5442585).
- 5.55** *Postcards* (R) (2063412).
- 6.00** *100 Per Cent* (S) (2067141).
- 6.30** *Family Affairs* (S) (T) (5308702).
- 7.05** **FILM** *Seems Like Old Times* (1980). Goldie Hawn, Charles Grodin and Chevy Chase romp through a sassy Neil Simon work (T) (6022702).
- 9.05** *Night Fever* (S) (7655899).
- 9.55** **FILM** *Stanley and Iris* (1989). Blue-collar factory romance, with Jane Fonda and Robert De Niro (T) (507832).
- 11.50** *Night Fever* (S) (T) (748122).
- 12.05** **FILM** *Common Law Cabin* (1967). Violent thriller (S) (4031262).
- 1.25** **FILM** *Soldiers of Innocence* (1990). War veteran Dennis Christen revisits Korea (591401).
- 3.20** **FILM** *The Boy Who Stole a Million* (1960). Unconvincing Spanish bank caper (4597246).
- 4.40** *Prisoner: Cell Block H* (3354264). **5.30** *100 Per Cent* (5788509). To 6am.

ITV/Regions

- Anglia**
As Granada except: 9.25 News: Weather (577715). 12.40 Shortland Street (542071). 1.00 *Coronation Street* (542071). 1.30 *Coronation Street* (542071). 2.00 *Coronation Street* (542071). 2.30 *Coronation Street* (542071). 3.00 *Coronation Street* (542071). 3.30 *Coronation Street* (542071). 4.00 *Coronation Street* (542071). 4.30 *Coronation Street* (542071). 5.00 *Coronation Street* (542071). 5.30 *Coronation Street* (542071). 6.00 *Coronation Street* (542071). 6.30 *Coronation Street* (542071). 7.00 *Coronation Street* (542071). 7.30 *Coronation Street* (542071). 8.00 *Coronation Street* (542071). 8.30 *Coronation Street* (542071). 9.00 *Coronation Street* (542071). 9.30 *Coronation Street* (542071). 10.00 *Coronation Street* (542071). 10.30 *Coronation Street* (542071). 11.00 *Coronation Street* (542071). 11.30 *Coronation Street* (542071). 12.00 *Coronation Street* (542071). 12.30 *Coronation Street* (542071). 1.00 *Coronation Street* (542071). 1.30 *Coronation Street* (542071). 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TUESDAY TELEVISION

TELEVISION & RADIO 21

BBC1

- 7.00 News** (T) (7594261). **7.30 Poddington Peas** (R) (6794373). **7.45 Teletubbies** (S) (6795477). **7.50 Yogi's Treasure Hunt** (R) (1630504). **8.00 To Me... to You** (S) (7597078). **8.30 Taz-Mania** (R) (7597078). **9.00 Sweet Valley High** (R) (7597078). **9.25 The Fame Game** (R) (7597078). **9.55 Teletubbies** (S) (6794373). **10.20 News; Weather** (T) (6745477).
- 10.30 FILM Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles** (1990). New York is cleared of crime by the mutants (S) (T) (6573788).
- 11.55 Wipeout** (S) (T) (6167226). **12.30 Laughing for Ages** (S) (T) (6756726). **12.50 The Weather Show** (S) (T) (7353563). **1.00 News** (T) (2127038). **1.15 Neighbours** (S) (T) (6584878). **1.40 Battersea Dogs' Home** (S) (T) (6782523). **2.30 2000 Leagues Under the Sea** (S) (T) (753962). **3.35 The World's Strongest Man** (S) (T) (650252).
- 4.05 FILM Mr. Nanny** (1993). "Hulk" Hogan babysits bad kids (S) (T) (4573894).
- 5.25 Blue Peter - the Best Bits** (S) (T) (655726). **5.55 Neighbours** (S) (T) (672436).
- 6.20 News; Weather** (S) (T) (571349).
- 6.35 Regional News** (T) (696894).
- 6.50 Only Fools and Horses**. 1991 Christmas special (R) (S) (T) (562417).
- 7.40 EastEnders** (S) (T) (767504).
- 8.10 Born to Be Wild - Chimpanzee Challenge with Nicholas Lyndhurst** (S) (T) (707349).
- 9.00 CHOICE The Echo**. New mystery from Minnie Walters. See *Choice*, below (S) (T) (7456558).
- 10.35 News; Weather** (T) (207900). **10.45 Come Dancing 50** (S) (T) (775397). **11.45 42 Up** (R) (S) (T) (659726).
- 12.50 FILM Doctor at Large** (1957). Dirk Bogarde tries the quiet life at a country practice (T) (606276).
- 2.25 News 24** (6832385). To 7am.

BBC2

- 6.45 FILM Woman of Paris** (1923). Charlie Chaplin's epic silent melodrama. With Edna Purviance (772287).
- 7.35 Match of the Day** (R) (S) (T) (6288610).
- 8.55 FILM On the Town** (1949). Rousing musical with shore-leave sailors Gene Kelly and Frank Sinatra (T) (2124610).
- 10.30 Perfectly Frank** (6555000). **10.35 The West** (T) (567829). **12.30 Classics for Kids** (S) (T) (7501542). **1.20 The Royal Institution Christmas Lectures** (4437207). **2.20 Perfectly Frank** (S) (T) (6555223). **2.25 Rex the Runt** (S) (T) (6555164). **2.35 Rex the Runt** (S) (T) (6555164). **2.50 Shooting the Century** (2564271). **3.35 Perfectly Frank** (S) (T) (6570504).
- 3.40 FILM Ocean's Eleven** (1960). Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin star in this crime caper (T) (2961287).
- 5.45 Poppea**. Welsh National Opera production of Monteverdi's opera telling of sex, intrigue and revenge at the court of Emperor Nero (S) (738610).
- 6.20 The Simpsons** (S) (T) (217639). **6.45 TOTP 2** (S) (T) (652691).
- 7.30 The Clinton Complex - How to Live with a Dysfunctional President**. Mark Lawson attempts to find out how, after all this year's scandals, Bill Clinton has managed to hang onto office (S) (T) (649691).
- 8.30 The Travel Show** (S) (T) (798691).
- 9.00 Steptoe and Son Christmas Special**. Classic comedy (T) (24613).
- 9.45 The Christmas Armistice**. A look back over 1998 (S) (T) (280233).
- 10.15 FILM Nixon** (1995). Anthony Hopkins is eerily good as disgraced president Richard Nixon. With Paul Sorvino (S) (T) (6537981).
- 1.20 FILM Suddenly** (1954). Frank Sinatra plays the vicious leader of hired assassins (5561092). To 2.40am.

ITV Granada

- 6.00 GMTV** (1761097). **9.25 News** (T) (4002078). **9.35 Tiny Toon Adventures** (R) (S) (T) (6702771). **10.00 Brilliant Creatures** (R) (S) (T) (6069981).
- 10.25 FILM D2: The Mighty Ducks** (1995). Emilio Estevez coaches ice-hockey brats (S) (T) (69300436).
- 12.20 Granada News** (T) (6443639). **12.30 News; Weather** (T) (63146). **1.00 Coronation Street** (R) (T) (7414).
- 1.30 FILM Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey** (1983). Furly adventure for kids (S) (T) (34320).
- 3.00 Cartoon** (6456691). **3.05 News** (T) (458962). **3.10 Local News** (673894).
- 3.20 FILM Superman** (1978). Comic-book hero's adventures (T) (9387639).
- 5.50 News; Weather** (T) (888550).
- 6.40 Granada Tonight** (T) (705900).
- 7.40 Emmerdale** (S) (T) (67455).
- 7.40 The Wishing Well** (T) (785900).
- 8.40 FILM Home Alone** (1990). Macaulay Culkin as the pint-sized nemesis of bungling crooks (64943271).
- 10.00 News; Weather** (T) (465875).
- 10.45 What's a Carry On?** The Carry On stars reunite to celebrate 40 years of comedy (T) (553122).
- 11.55 FILM Carry On Cleo** (1965). Elizabeth Taylor's Cleopatra is spoofed in this Carry On caper (T) (553233).
- 1.00 Nationwide Football League Extra** (22295).
- 2.00 FILM Sword of the Valiant** (1983). Swashbuckler (733363).
- 3.55 U840 - Live in the New South Africa** (345295). **5.30 Bugs Bunny Ventures to Disaster** (657672). **5.55 News** (623572). To 6am.

Channel 4

- 6.00 Sesame Street** (62943). **7.00 Ovide** (R) (73453). **7.30 The Magic School Bus** (R) (62943). **8.00 The Big Breakfast** (S) (T) (20329). **10.00 Planet Pop** (27768). **10.30 Eerie, Indiana** (R) (T) (7523). **11.00 Madison** (S) (T) (8097). **11.30 Babylon 5** (S) (T) (421691).
- 12.35 FILM North** (1994). Precocious Elijah Wood divorces his inattentive parents in this comedy (T) (62849542).
- 2.40 Maxim Vengerov Masterclass** (707368). **3.05 The Village** (643639). **3.20 Tom Stoppard** (S) (T) (720839). **3.50 Fifteen to One Highlights** (S) (T) (917320). **4.00 Countdown** (628436). **4.55 Ricki Lake** (S) (T) (750789).
- 5.30 The Bear**. Animation (T) (629).
- 6.00 Wise Up World** (T) (41897).
- 7.00 The Year in 30 Seconds**. Advertising creative Trevor Beattie tries to capture the essence of 1998 in a 30-second commercial (3184).
- 7.30 Vengerov: Playing by Heart**. Profile of violinist Maxim Vengerov (S) (T) (63707).
- 8.30 Brookside** (T) (6639).
- 9.00 Stonehenge: Secret of the Stones**. First of a two-part series a theory that Stonehenge was the site of a symbolic sexual act between gods (1438).
- 10.00 Rising Damp** (R) (T) (66504). **10.30 Eddie Izzard - Glorious** (674097). **11.35 Eurythmics**. Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells (259639).
- 12.05 FILM Dead Man** (1995). Johnny Depp as an Ohio clerk who finds himself out of his depth (T) (72040540).
- 2.20 FILM Pick-Up on South Street** (1953). Richard Widmark stars in this melodrama (1883382).
- 3.35 FILM Side Street** (1949). Crisp crime B-pic (248924).
- 5.10 Sharky and George** (774108). **5.35 2 Stupid Dogs** (657255). To 6am.

Channel 5

- 6.00 The Wind in the Willows** (R) (2553237). **6.25 Roobarb** (R) (7052271). **6.30 Dappledawn Farm** (R) (425368). **7.00 Womack's House** (R) (665455). **7.30 Mikshake!** (S) (2226455). **7.35 Havakazoo** (R) (S) (663555). **8.00 George of the Jungle** (R) (7294610).
- 8.30 FILM Lassie and Neeka** (1968). TV companion (2729152).
- 10.20 Sunset Beach** (S) (T) (6633879). **11.00 Lezza** (R) (77339). **12.00 5 News** (S) (T) (7204097). **12.30 Family Affairs** (S) (T) (2625707). **1.00 Bold and the Beautiful** (S) (T) (668726). **1.30 Wow! Big Boy!** (2624078). **2.00 100 Per Cent** (278555). **2.30 Good Afternoon** (S) (2862233).
- 3.30 FILM Murphy's War** (1971). War romp starring a brilliantly manic Peter O'Toole as a sailor who vows to settle the score with a U-boat which sank his ship (T) (1563078).
- 5.30 Name That Tune** (2033184).
- 6.00 100 Per Cent** (S) (2030097).
- 6.30 Family Affairs** (S) (T) (2021349).
- 7.00 5 News** (S) (T) (176146).
- 7.30 Polar Odyssey** (R) (S) (T) (2010233).
- 8.00 The Sweeney** (T) (6264981).
- 9.00 FILM The Incident** (1990). Walter Matthau's washed-out Second World War Colorado lawyer outages locals by flushing skeletons out of closets, while defending a German prisoner who's accused of murdering the doc in the town's POW camp (T) (8332147).
- 10.50 The Jack Docherty Show** (S) (2551523). **11.30 Lezza** (T) (171436).
- 12.10 FILM In Cold Blood** (1957). Stunning recreation of a shocking crime and its grim aftermath. With Robert Blake, Scott Wilson (4403858).
- 2.35 Major League Baseball Review** (6038214). **4.40 Prisoner: Cell Block H** (206109). **5.30 100 Per Cent** (R) (S) (733318). To 6am.

ITV/Regions

- Anglia**
As Granada except: 12.30 Sports at the Sports Ground; 12.35 Border News; 12.40 News; 12.45 Border News; 12.50 News; 12.55 Border News; 1.00 News; 1.05 Border News; 1.10 News; 1.15 Border News; 1.20 News; 1.25 Border News; 1.30 News; 1.35 Border News; 1.40 News; 1.45 Border News; 1.50 News; 1.55 Border News; 2.00 News; 2.05 Border News; 2.10 News; 2.15 Border News; 2.20 News; 2.25 Border News; 2.30 News; 2.35 Border News; 2.40 News; 2.45 Border News; 2.50 News; 2.55 Border News; 3.00 News; 3.05 Border News; 3.10 News; 3.15 Border News; 3.20 News; 3.25 Border News; 3.30 News; 3.35 Border News; 3.40 News; 3.45 Border News; 3.50 News; 3.55 Border News; 4.00 News; 4.05 Border News; 4.10 News; 4.15 Border News; 4.20 News; 4.25 Border News; 4.30 News; 4.35 Border News; 4.40 News; 4.45 Border News; 4.50 News; 4.55 Border News; 5.00 News; 5.05 Border News; 5.10 News; 5.15 Border News; 5.20 News; 5.25 Border News; 5.30 News; 5.35 Border News; 5.40 News; 5.45 Border News; 5.50 News; 5.55 Border News; 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SUNDAY TELEVISION & RADIO

BBC1

6.00 Cartoon (4033379). **6.25 Film:** Jacob (7762623). **7.55 Touched by an Angel** (7236993). **9.25 News** (456114). **9.30 The Heaven and Earth Show** (22911). **10.30 The Life of Birds** (739135). **11.20 World Cup '98 Review** (401737). **12.20 Laughing for Ages** (984222). **12.50 News: Weather** (2120666). **12.55 EastEnders** (4293237).

2.45 FILM The Wizard of Oz (Victor Fleming 1939 US). Judy Garland classic (2697566).

4.25 EastEnders (3140737). **5.20 News: Weather** (2976379). **5.35 Local News: Weather** (663262).

5.40 Songs of Praise. Daniel O'Donnell in concert at Wembley Arena (S) (T) (817195).

6.45 Antiques Roadshow - the Next Generation. A look at the collecting passions of the younger generation (S) (T) (817377).

7.00 In Love with Elizabeth: the Early Life of the Queen Mother. Documents the childhood and early life of the "nation's favourite great-grandmother", Elizabeth, the Queen Mother (S) (T) (8602).

8.00 This is Your Life. Michael Aspel takes a walk down Coronation Street to surprise one of the cast members (S) (T) (889025).

8.40 CHOICE Mrs Brown (John Madden 1997 UK). Judi Dench's Queen Victoria finds solace with Billy Connolly's Scottish groom. See *Film of the Day*, below (S) (T) (2610306).

10.20 News: Regional News: Weather (T) (583821).

10.35 Heartburn Hotel. The sitcom set in a rundown Birmingham hotel starring Tim Healey (S) (T) (688176).

11.05 Alf Garnett: in Sickness and in Health (R) (T) (944911). **11.35 The Big End** (S) (T) (593089).

12.05 FILM The Sting (George Roy Hill 1973 US). Butch Cassidy co-stars Paul Newman and Robert Redford reform for a Depression-era gambling scam (Then Weather) (T) (4807206). To 2.10am

BBC2

6.00 Bump's Christmas Story (5005398). **7.40 Teletubbies** (5058485). **8.20 Wizard of Oz** (3809466). **8.40 Fievel's American Tails** (819737). **9.05 Queen's Nose** (860973). **9.35 Wayne Manifesto** (700466). **10.05 Film: The Midas Touch** (476088). **11.20 The Royal Institution Christmas Lectures** (4015379). **12.20 Cricket** (981284).

12.50 FILM Quo Vadis? (Mervyn LeRoy 1951 US). Roman epic with Robert Taylor (T) (5478314).

3.35 Choir of the Year (594934).

4.25 Simon Rattle (S) (3157027).

5.35 The Car Show (6352008).

6.05 Rex the Runt (S) (T) (690824).

6.35 Star Trek: Voyager Janeway asks Seven of Nine to become part of the crew, but she is determined to return to the Borg. (S) (T) (65379).

7.00 Ray Meera's World of Survival. Our man joins the Aboriginal people of Australia (S) (T) (8398).

7.30 The Car's the Star. Quentin Wilson on the Lads (S) (T) (988076).

7.50 Earth Story. Aubrey Manning sets out to discover why, unlike our planetary neighbours, the Earth is a living planet (S) (T) (407653).

8.40 Xmas Shooting Stars. Last year's, in fact. Guests are Neil Morrissey, Anna Friel, Alvin Stardust and Clive Mantle (S) (T) (692059).

9.20 CHOICE Ted and Ralph. Paul Whitehouse and Charlie Higson expand on their popular *Fast Show* characters. See *Comedy of the Day*, below (S) (T) (3549802).

10.30 Merry Mind the Buzzcocks. Comedy pop quiz with Boy George, Noddy Holder, Jonathan Ross and Louise Wener from Sleeper (S) (T) (78843).

11.10 FILM Arena: I Shot Andy Warhol (Mary Harron 1997 US). The story of Valerie Solanas, founder and sole member of SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men), who shot artist Andy Warhol in his New York offices in 1968. Lili Taylor stars (S) (96114).

12.45 Andrea Bocelli: a Night in Tuscany (S) (723206). To 1.45am.

ITV LWT

6.00 GMTV (5755). **8.00 Diggil** (559244). **9.25 Old Bear** (760433). **9.55 Mole's Christmas** (792447). **10.25 Percy the Park Keeper** (221673). **11.00 Morning Worship** (7640). **12.00 Back to Bethlehem** (28843). **12.30 Crosstalk** (3165). **1.00 News** (2139492). **1.15 New Labour in Focus** (451376). **2.45 F1 Special** (455331).

3.45 FILM Carry On Jack (Gerald Thomas 1963 UK). Comedy with Bernard Cribbins (301195).

4.45 Local News (5689602). **4.55 News** (568914). **5.05 The Crazy World of Joe Pasquale** (6484027).

5.35 FILM Dumbo (Ben Sharpsteen 1941 US). Disney's classic animated film about the big-eared elephant (T) (444422).

6.45 Kids Say the Funniest Things. Michael Barrymore orchestrates their laugh at children (S) (T) (572805).

7.30 Coronation Street. As Alec mulls over his future, Natalie makes an amazing offer (T) (468).

8.00 You've Been Framed! Lisa Riley presents more mishaps caught on viewers' home videos (S) (838869).

8.45 CHOICE Cider with Rosie. Dramatisation by John Mortimer of Laurie Lee's account of growing up in a remote Cotswold village in the 1920s. See *Drama of the Day*, below (S) (T) (892244).

10.45 Christmas at St Albion's (830244).

10.55 ITN News: Weather (T) (585282).

11.10 You're Only Human with Jeff Green (T) (938350). **11.40 Film:** Deliver Them from Evil: The Taking of Alva West (M0553). **1.30 Box Office America Christmas Special** (76933). **2.30 MTV Europe Music Awards 98** (R) (795954). **3.55 The Making of Slipstream** (9927335). **4.25 Cybernet** (R) (843204). To 4.55am.

Channel 4

6.05 Dumb and Dumber (401806). **6.30 Camberwick Green** (461809). **6.50 Frosty Tooties** (6848737). **6.55 Dog City** (814892). **7.25 Jingle Bell Rock** (816806). **8.00 T4** (4650331). **8.20 Johnny Bravo** (701756). **8.50 Sister Sister** (515782). **10.50 Planet Pop** (691282). **12.00 Holyrocks** (26405). **12.30 Late Lunch** (439195). **1.35 Waitons** (825805). **2.35 Blue Christmas** (804322). **2.50 Heron and the Crane** (192008).

8.00 FILM Hello Dolly (Gene Kelly 1969 US). Musical with Barbra Streisand and Walter Matthau (T) (7018602).

5.40 The Mini Job - the Making of the Italian Job. Looks at the cult 1969 movie (644244).

6.40 Mini Man. Portrait of Sir Alec Issigonis, the man responsible for the design of the Mini and the Morris Minor (T) (812640).

7.00 Mini Years. Russell Bulgin pays homage to the Mini, with fellow enthusiasts rally star Tino Makhene and actress Jenny Agutter (27495).

7.40 Arthouse. Looks at how the anniversary of the painting of Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece *The Last Supper*, will not be a cause for celebration because restoration has diminished the original (T) (845973).

8.40 FILM Edward Scissorhands (Tim Burton 1990 US). Poignant satirical fantasy about a boy with sharp metal shears for hands, who is the creation of an inventor who dies before finishing his work. The boy's years of isolation in a Gothic castle are ended when a kindly Avon saleswoman takes him into her home in the pastel-coloured suburbs below. With Johnny Depp as the sharp-fingered lad and Winona Ryder as the girl that loves him (T) (42594814).

10.35 Johnny Vegas Television Show. The highly rated satirist from St Helens - a former runner-up this year - gets his first TV exposure (453534).

11.20 FILM The Horseman on the Roof (Jean-Paul Rappeneau 1995 FR). Lavish historical romance set in Provence during the 19th century. Juliette Binoche stars (5059303).

1.50 Terry Pratchett's Discworld (R) (9316312). To 2.15am.

Channel 5

6.00 Mixing It (790508). **6.30 Hawkazoo** (438234). **7.00 Dappledown Farm** (871811). **7.30 Milkshake!** (235791). **7.35 Winkles House** (692914). **8.00 Do You Believe It?** (733046). **8.30 Revelation Game** (733973). **9.00 Sickin' Around** (732008). **9.30 Fort Boyard** (791973). **10.30 Sister Said** (791973). **11.00 Daria** (551756). **11.30 Singled Out** (552485). **12.00 Bjork** (733553). **12.30 Eco Warriors** (2954263). **1.00 Gods of Olympus** (5284440). **1.30 5 News** (899773). **1.50 Lynx Location Apollo** (630534). **2.20 Movie Chart Show** (3224282). **2.30 Family Affairs** (4299440).

5.40 FILM Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (Mel Damsel 1989 US). Keshia Knight Pullman from *The Cosby Show* stars in this remake of the Bing Crosby musical based on the Mark Twain story. A 10-year-old Connecticut schoolgirl is knocked unconscious and wakes up in the Court of King Arthur (30794379).

7.00 From Jesus to Christ. Terry Waite presents a new documentary series about the rise of Christianity. Recent archaeological finds and fresh historical interpretations challenge previous ideas about Jesus and the first Christians (S) (8391089).

8.00 Paradise in Peril. The Galapagos Islands have more endemic species and sub-species of seabirds than any other tropical island group. More than any other Galapagos wildlife, these birds are affected by the ocean current (S) (T) (830737).

9.00 FILM Tricks (Kenneth Fink 1997 US). Mini Rogers plays a single mother, working as a hooker in Las Vegas to pay her way through college, who gets badly beaten by a client. Tyne Daly also stars in this melodrama (S) (T) (38450973).

10.50 The Real Monty. Documentary looking at the lives and work of a group of male strippers from Yorkshire (R) (S) (T) (5679305).

11.50 The Comedy Store (5773756). **12.20 Open Mic Awards 1998** (R) (274461). **1.20 NFL American Football Review** (8505241). **4.40 Tits and Fibs** (R) (8130087). To 5.05am.

ITV/Regions

Anglia
As LWT except: **12.30** *Reel of the Year* (5169). **2.45** *Coronation Street* (30156). **4.45** *Anglia News* (558502). **5.30** *MTV Awards 98* (558502). **6.30** *The Making of Slipstream* (76732). **4.30** *Cybernet* (71664). **5.00** *The Making of What Dreams May Come* (785158). **8.25** *Coronation Street* (789157).

Central
As LWT except: **12.30** *Dinosaurs* (436668). **12.55** *Central News* (2129008). **3.45** *Coronation Street* (30156). **4.45** *Central News and Sport* (558502).

ITV Wales
As LWT except: **12.30** *Back to Bethlehem* (805534). **12.25** *Soccer* (860821). **12.55** *ITV News* (2129008). **3.45** *Front Row* (464378). **4.30** *Movies, Games and Videos* (477282). **4.45** *ITV News* (558502). **2.30** - **5.25** *As Anglia*.

ITV West
As LWT except: **12.25** *West Match Plus* (808621). **3.45** *Hollywood's Greatest Stars* (464943).

Meridian
As LWT except: **12.30** *7 Days* (225705). **12.50** *Meridian News and Weather* (7365263). **3.45** *Meridian News* (558502). **4.45** - **5.25** *As Anglia*. **5.25** *Movie Show Special* (789157).

Westcountry
As LWT except: **12.30** *West Weekend Match* (8169). **3.45** *Emmerdale* (30156). **4.45** *Westcountry News* (558502). **5.20** - **5.25** *As Anglia*.

As LWT except: 12.30 *Goals on Sunday* (5169). **3.45** *Coronation Street* (30156). **4.45** *Calendar News and Sport* (558502).

Tyne Tees
As Yorkshire except: **12.30** *Duffy Duck* (5169). **4.45** *North East News and Sport* (558502).

As Channel 4 except: 12.30 *Planned Plant* (7600737). **1.50** *Go!* (78485027). **2.35** *Brookside* (5305843). **3.45** *Famous Fidd* (704329). **4.30** *Frank Panther* (564771). **5.30** *Gwynedd Gogs* (1010981). **5.55** *Gogwana* (2994433). **6.30** *Poobal v Cwm* (405378). **6.45** *Dechrau Canu* (104291). **8.00** *Cwm Gwlad* (2144845). **9.00** *v Palmant Aur* (2994433). **10.05** *Newyddod* (5448843). **10.15** *Film: Don Juan Delmarco* (562737). **12.00** *Film: The Horseman on the Roof* (7873751). **2.30** *Closa*.

RTÉ
6.35 *F1: A Good Man in Africa* (7950409). **8.05** *Film: Money From Home* (474398). **9.50** *Would You Believe* (8504621). **10.20** *Toy Stories* (8458905). **11.30** *Service* (558502). **11.45** *Frank Panther* (564771). **12.20** *News* (2328868). **12.25** *Film: The Great Story Ever Told* (9644300).

3.55 *Film: 1939: Extra-Territorial* (1655423). **6.00** *The Ring* (574006). **6.01** *Six-One News* (2077092). **6.20** *HeartBeat* (1098640). **7.25** *Coronation Street* (30156). **7.55** *Golden Age* (5930170). **8.25** *Film: Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls* (8305664). **10.25** *News* (8210800). **10.45** *Nobel Peace Prize Concert* (558502). **12.45** *Frank Panther* (564771). **1.20** *ITV News* (558502). **1.25** *ITV News* (558502). **1.30** *ITV News* (558502). **1.35** *ITV News* (558502). **1.40** *ITV News* (558502). **1.45** *ITV News* (558502). **1.50** *ITV News* (558502). **1.55** *ITV News* (558502). **2.00** *ITV News* (558502). **2.05** *ITV News* (558502). **2.10** *ITV News* (558502). **2.15** *ITV News* (558502). **2.20** *ITV News* (558502). **2.25** *ITV News* (558502). **2.30** *ITV News* (558502). **2.35** *ITV News* (558502). **2.40** *ITV News* (558502). **2.45** *ITV News* (558502). **2.50** *ITV News* (558502). **2.55** *ITV News* (558502). **3.00** *ITV News* (558502). **3.05** *ITV News* (558502). **3.10** *ITV News* (558502). **3.15** *ITV News* (558502). **3.20** *ITV News* (558502). **3.25** *ITV News* (558502). **3.30** *ITV News* (558502). **3.35** *ITV News* (558502). **3.40** *ITV News* (558502). **3.45** *ITV News* (558502). **3.50** *ITV News* (558502). **3.55** *ITV News* (558502). **4.00** *ITV News* (558502). **4.05** *ITV News* (558502). **4.10** *ITV News* (558502). **4.15** *ITV News* (558502). **4.20** *ITV News* (558502). **4.25** *ITV News* (558502). **4.30** *ITV News* (558502). **4.35** *ITV News* (558502). **4.40** *ITV News* (558502). **4.45** *ITV News* (558502). **4.50** *ITV News* (558502). **4.55** *ITV News* (558502). **5.00** *ITV News* (558502). **5.05** *ITV News* (558502). **5.10** *ITV News* (558502). **5.15** *ITV News* (558502). **5.20** *ITV News* (558502). **5.25** *ITV News* (558502). **5.30** *ITV News* (558502). **5.35** *ITV News* (558502). **5.40** *ITV News* (558502). **5.45** *ITV News* (558502). **5.50** *ITV News* (558502). **5.55** *ITV News* (558502). **6.00** *ITV News* (558502). **6.05** *ITV News* (558502). **6.10** *ITV News* (558502). **6.15** *ITV News* (558502). **6.20** *ITV News* (558502). **6.25** *ITV News* (558502). **6.30** *ITV News* (558502). **6.35** *ITV News* (558502). **6.40** *ITV News* (558502). **6.45** *ITV News* (558502). **6.50** *ITV News* (558502). **6.55** *ITV News* (558502). **7.00** *ITV News* (558502). **7.05** *ITV News* (558502). **7.10** *ITV News* (558502). **7.15** *ITV News* (558502). **7.20** *ITV News* (558502). **7.25** *ITV News* (558502). **7.30** *ITV News* (558502). **7.35** *ITV News* (558502). **7.40** *ITV News* (558502). **7.45** *ITV News* (558502). **7.50** *ITV News* (558502). **7.55** *ITV News* (558502). **8.00** *ITV News* (558502). **8.05** *ITV News* (558502). **8.10** *ITV News* (558502). **8.15** *ITV News* (558502). **8.20** *ITV News* (558502). **8.25** *ITV News* (558502). **8.30** *ITV News* (558502). **8.35** *ITV News* (558502). **8.40** *ITV News* (558502). **8.45** *ITV News* (558502). **8.50** *ITV News* (558502). **8.55** *ITV News* (558502). **9.00** *ITV News* (558502). **9.05** *ITV News* (558502). **9.10** *ITV News* (558502). **9.15** *ITV News* (558502). **9.20** *ITV News* (558502). **9.25** *ITV News* (558502). **9.30** *ITV News* (558502). **9.35** *ITV News* (558502). **9.40** *ITV News* (558502). **9.45** *ITV News* (558502). **9.50** *ITV News* (558502). **9.55** *ITV News* (558502). **10.00** *ITV News* (558502). **10.05** *ITV News* (558502). **10.10** *ITV News* (558502). **10.15** *ITV News* (558502). **10.20** *ITV News* (558502). **10.25** *ITV News* (558502). **10.30** *ITV News* (558502). **10.35** *ITV News* (558502). **10.40** *ITV News* (558502). **10.45** *ITV News* (558502). **10.50** *ITV News* (558502). **10.55** *ITV News* (558502). **11.00** *ITV News* (558502). **11.05** *ITV News* (558502). **11.10** *ITV News* (558502). **11.15** *ITV News* (558502). **11.20** *ITV News* (558502). **11.25** *ITV News* (558502). **11.30** *ITV News* (558502). **11.35** *ITV News* (558502). **11.40** *ITV News* (558502). **11.45** *ITV News* (558502). **11.50** *ITV News* (558502). **11.55** *ITV News* (558502). **12.00** *ITV News* (558502). **12.05** *ITV News* (558502). **12.10** *ITV News* (558502). **12.15** *ITV News* (558502). **12.20** *ITV News* (558502). **12.25** *ITV News* (558502). **12.30** *ITV News* (558502). **12.35** *ITV News* (558502). <

